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The Jackson Campaign

Jesse Jackson's primary campaign evoked a variety of responses among the Dissent *editors. As we see it, this is a normal part of democratic political life. Below several editors express their individual opinions.*

Martin Kilson

EXPLAINING JESSE JACKSON

The most important impact of Jesse Jackson's campaign has been his ability to fashion for black Americans a parity-status within the Democratic party. A parity-status with regard to a political party is the opposite of a client-status. It entails the coalescence of relatively sovereign groups or interests. Parity-status is what white ethnic groups carved out for themselves within the Democratic party in an earlier period. The Irish did so first by the 1920s, though not consolidating their parity-status until the 1950s, as reflected in John F. Kennedy's presidential nomination in 1960. Italians, Jews, and Polish-Americans—and smaller groups like Greeks and Armenians—didn't achieve parity-status in the Democratic party until the 1950s–1970s era. Thus acquiring parity-status in the Democratic party for Italians, Jews, and Poles overlaps the period in which blacks enter the rocky climb to intraparty equality.

This intersection of the paths of blacks and white ethnics to intraparty equality has been extremely stressful for the Democratic party, frequently smashing the norms of political decorum between white and black Democrats. Add to this the intraparty stress stemming from bids by still other interests for parity-status (feminists, gay liberationists, environmentalists, etc.) and the conditions for electoral disarray in the Democratic party are fulfilled. These conditions have reigned, more or less, from the early 1970s through the 1980s, contributing to but in no way the sole cause of the right-wing Republican ascendancy under Reagan.

In the context of national politics, the Jackson campaigns in 1984 and especially in 1988 must be seen as crucial stages in a protracted liberal-Democratic restoration. Key elements in this Jackson-led liberal restoration were (1) the expansion of black voters through Jackson's 1984 campaign; (2) the 1984 campaign's cultivation of black voters' awareness as a response to the Reaganite Republican indifference to and sometimes contempt for blacks' political concerns; (3) the special role of black votes in restoring a Democratic majority in the Senate in the 1986 congressional elections (e.g., with whites split between Democrats and Republicans, black votes ranging from 82 percent Democratic in Georgia to 88 percent in North Carolina and Alabama enabled victory for Senators Fowler, Sanford, and Shelby); and (4) Jackson's skillful cultivation in the 1988 campaign of a solid liberal political message that is fundamentally cross-racial in its appeal.

These developments have given the Jackson 1988 campaign the character of a major political transformation. First, white voters among the Democrats have been effectively challenged by a black presidential candidate—Jesse Jackson—*to seriously entertain the idea of him as a national leader,* whether he wins or loses the nomination quest. As pollster Patrick Caddell has observed, this basic change in Jackson's national political persona—from black activist to national leader—has caught the cautious establishmentarian Democratic leaders by surprise. "They must deal with the emergence of Mr. Jackson as a serious candidate," says Caddell. "First they must recognize that his rise is no fluke." (*New York Times,* March 30, 1988.)

And deal with Jackson they have. The first nudge of the Democratic party establishment toward Jackson came from the pre-Michigan primary

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CBS/*New York Times* poll that showed Jackson's favorable rating among Democrats reaching an all-time high of 44 percent and his unfavorable rating falling to an all-time low of 29 percent. Then came Jackson's surprising Michigan victory in late March (gaining 25 percent of the white votes), an event that sparked National Democratic Committee head Paul Kirk, hitherto cool and nearly disrespectful to Jackson, to gather party patron saints like Clark Clifford for a Democratic–top brass breakfast for Jackson. Thus the aura of the Michigan victory legitimates Jackson among the Democratic establishment, and Jackson's Michigan votes find him by early April claiming overall 27 percent of the Democratic primary vote and 25 percent of the delegates. This compares most favorably to Jackson's 1984 primary total performance, when he gained only 19 percent of the total primary vote and just 10 percent of Democratic delegates. Clearly, Jackson's 1988 vote and delegate tally will dwarf the 1984 performance.

It is particularly important for both Jackson and the Democratic party that in his 1988 campaign the black vote for Jackson has increased in most states—especially southern and big industrial states—by ten to fifteen points, from 80 percent plus in 1984 to 90 percent plus in 1988. This stability in Jackson's appeal to black voters enables him to devote some two-thirds of his time and resources in 1988 to forging a successful appeal to white voters. *While in absolute terms his white-voter appeal remains wanting, in relative terms Jackson's white-voter appeal in 1988 has turned the corner, as it were.* Thus after gaining below 10 percent of white votes in industrial states in 1984, Jackson's 1988 white-voter support fundamentally reverses the 1984 situation. For example, Jackson mustered 25 percent of white votes in the Michigan caucuses, 20 percent of the white vote in Connecticut, 23 percent in Wisconsin, 15 percent in New York, and 13 percent in Pennsylvania.

What is particularly significant about Jackson's doubling and even tripling his white votes in 1988 is that these votes have kept him keenly competitive in the delegate count. Jackson claimed a strong second to front-runner Michael Dukakis at the time of the Pennsylvania primary on April 26. The delegate-tally at that date was 1,097 Dukakis, 838 Jackson (2,082 needed to nominate)—with Al Gore having dropped out of the campaign the week before, following his weak third-place loss in New York. But in ending his campaign Gore holds on to his delegates until the convention, thereby clearly deferring to Jackson's new political clout as a national Democratic figure. This clout Jackson owes essentially to his skillful cross-racial political appeal to white voters.

Jackson has positioned himself in a strong second place behind Dukakis—whose campaign resources dwarf Jackson's five to one—not by deferring to the Democratic establishment's timidity on major social issues in American life (e.g., homelessness, black unemployment, black and white poverty, environmental problems, farm crisis, reindustrialization problems, trade issues, etc.). As the *Wall Street Journal* remarked (April 1, 1988), "In their presidential wilderness years . . . [the establishment] Democrats have been debating how to adapt their message to Ronald Reagan's success." Jackson, to his credit, has spurned this surrender to Reaganism. While chiding Jackson, the *Wall Street Journal* observes that "the substance of Mr. Jackson's message . . . might best be described as the politics of socialist joy. His economic and defense programs, in particular, make Mr. Jackson not merely 'the most liberal' Democrat but an authentically radical voice. It is a voice more typical of the British Labor Party than of American politics." Liberal and progressive observers share the *Wall Street Journal*'s characterization of Jackson's message. For example, writing in the *New Republic* (March 8, 1988) Barbara Ehrenreich, co-chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, praises Jackson for adding "a little class warfare" to the Democratic primary campaign. And Andrew Kopkind, writing in *The Nation* (April 2, 1988), observed approvingly that Jackson is "running that unspeakable anomaly, that horror of all horrors, a 'class campaign.' "

Jackson's progressive message has clearly moved the Democratic candidates' ideological fulcrum to left of the establishment's conservative or quasi-Reaganite center. This is especially true of Dukakis, whose message to voters in the 1988 primary has unmistakable Jacksonesque overtones.

The central problem confronting the new Jackson-led liberal restoration is the problematic evidence of the restoration's staying power. As far as Jackson himself is concerned, there is indeed solid evidence of his earnestness. Just look at his key aides, all well-tested progressives like Ann Lewis, Gerald Austin, and Mark Steitz. And these aides are backed by liberal-to-progressive expert advisers attached to progressive research institutions like the Urban Institute and the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington. But, alas, there are not a whole lot of votes among political aides and policy analysts.

There are two aspects to the issue of the willingness of white voters to back a liberal

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Democratic party. First, there's the fact that Jackson is black; and second, there's the fact that he has competed with a liberal Democrat, Michael Dukakis. Both voting and polling data suggest that white voters are of several minds on these choices.

With regard to Jackson as the initial agent of a leftward-liberalizing of the Democrats, the primary results indicate there are on average 20 percent of white voters outside the South who accept Jackson's role in the Democratic party. In class terms, middle- and upper-income whites were stronger for Jackson in states like Pennsylvania—e.g., voters with incomes of $19,000 or less gave Jackson 13 percent of votes, while voters with incomes $50,000 or more gave Jackson 16 percent; and in Connecticut $19,000 or less white households made up 16 percent of Jackson's white votes, and $40,000 or more white households made up 46% of Jackson's white votes. On the other hand, within the South there are only around 8 percent of white voters favorable to Jackson—e.g., 6 percent in the Super Tuesday vote in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, and 7 percent in Florida, North Carolina, and Kentucky—with almost double this in Virginia and Texas (14 percent).

CBS/*New York Times* polling data in the New York primary found the biggest voter bloc, white Catholics (26 percent of the vote), giving only 13 percent to Jackson and 70 percent to Dukakis. And the second biggest voter bloc, Jewish voters (25 percent of the vote), favored Jackson even less than white Catholics—merely 7 percent for Jackson and 77 percent Dukakis. However, white Protestants (fourth largest bloc at 12 percent) were 25 percent Jackson and 57 percent Dukakis.

So, if the New York primary results are typical, then white-ethnic voters—who are crucial in big industrial states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, New York, etc.—are clearly not yet ready for a Jackson-led liberal restoration. This is due largely to that prominent malady of the white-American mind—racism, or rather the contemporary variant I call neoracism, which rejects lynchings and institutionalized segregation but isn't ready for a black mayor of Chicago and New York or a black president or vice-president. Even many Jewish voters share this neoracist demeanor—note, for instance, the small Jewish vote for capable black mayoral candidates like Chicago's Harold Washington and Philadelphia's Wilson Goode, who ran against a race-baiting white politician, Frank Rizzo. But this neoracist aspect of the minuscule Jewish vote for Jackson in New York is complicated by Jackson's "Hymietown" remark in 1984 and his past ties with the anti-Semitic Louis Farrakhan. Only Hispanic voters among nonblack voting blocs appear free of contemporary America's neoracist demeanor when it comes to voting for black candidates. Thus a black mayor has governed for four terms in Los Angeles, where Hispanics are the largest voting bloc, and in the New York 1988 primary Jackson won the Hispanic vote nearly two to one over Dukakis—61 percent to 38 percent.

A national poll on April 20–21 by *Time* found 50 percent of voters for Dukakis, 39 percent for Bush, with a Dukakis-Jackson ticket defeating Bush 47 percent to 42 percent. The *Time* poll found support also for Dukakis's liberalism, at least insofar as he was favored over Bush in addressing issues like drugs (45 percent Dukakis, 30 percent Bush), homelessness (57 percent, 21 percent), federal deficit (41 percent, 32 percent). And Dukakis was not seen as deficient in handling such hardnosed matters as the economy, for he just edges out Bush on this (43 percent, 42 percent). (*Time*, May 2, 1988).

Finally, if we assume enough disenchantment with Reaganism among Democratic voters who defected to Republicans in the 1980s, then the guarantee of a Dukakis victory lies in a heavy black vote for the Democratic ticket. Some pundits have intimated that unless Jackson, with his strong delegate count, is shown major respect by Dukakis and the Democratic chiefs, sizable sectors of black voters will be grievously offended, feeling racism still at work as usual, and sit out the November elections.

Although some polling data on the New York primary revealed signs of a potential black revolt against the Democratic nominee—owing mainly to the vicious assault on Jackson by Mayor Ed Koch—national survey data indicate a basic maturity in blacks' perception of Jackson's intraparty status. Thus when asked in a recent *Time* poll, "Has Jesse Jackson been treated fairly by" Democratic party leaders, 50 percent of black voters say yes, 29 percent say no; by the Dukakis campaign, 55 percent say yes, 25 percent no; and by white voters, 52 percent say yes, 29 percent no. When asked by Gallup/*Newsweek* how they will vote in November if Jackson is not Dukakis's running-mate, 72 percent of black voters say Democratic, 5 percent Republican, and 13 percent won't vote.

If these patterns hold up, Jackson's task is clearly cut out for him. Assuming Dukakis will choose a white southerner as a running mate, Jackson can clearly parlay his delegate-count influence into a weighty factor in Dukakis's vice-presidential choice. Jackson's clout will also shape the Dukakis

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platform, as well as the composition of Dukakis's campaign inasmuch as a black presence will be apparent among Dukakis's key advisers. Exacting a firm promise for, say, two black cabinet or subcabinet posts, and for posts other than black-related ones like HUD, can also be expected.

In return, Jackson will owe Dukakis and the Democrats a major quid pro quo—namely, to induce and help mobilize a major black voter registration and election turnout. If this is realized, there will be a Dukakis victory in November and a solid framework for reinforcing blacks' parity-status in the Democratic party alongside the parity-status of White ethnic groups. □

Michael Harrington

A CASE FOR JACKSON

Jesse Jackson's 1988 campaign marks a historic breakthrough in American politics. It is the first time that a "social democratic" platform has been presented in the mainstream of American politics and attracted significant mass support. The journalistic cliché was, and is, that Jackson's program is "extremist," vague, outrageously expensive. In fact, as a correspondent for the London *Financial Times* reported, only in Ronald Reagan's America could Jackson's eminently moderate and sensible ideas be seen as far out. Those ideas, on full employment, health, North-South and the like, are familiar to readers of *Dissent,* members of Democratic Socialists of America, and the broad democratic left. They are, more or less, what we have been talking about during the past decade and in some cases the people who articulated them for Jackson came from our world.

Second, Jackson has managed to put together an extraordinary interracial coalition. In 1984 I was disturbed that the "rainbow" campaign was primarily black with little appeal to other minorities or whites. When Jackson announced in that year that "our time has come," he was speaking in the accents of racial pride, which was understandable but not designed to broaden the coalition. The contrast with 1988 (and the several years of informal campaigning that preceded the actual declaration of candidacy) is stark.

Obviously, Jackson has retained his black base, for instance getting more than 90 percent of its vote in the New York primary. But then those sages who announce that Jackson would be nowhere were he not black might as well have said that John F. Kennedy would have been a nonentity had he not been an Irish-Catholic politician from Massachusetts. All serious candidates start with a parochial base, be it racial or ethnic or whatever. The question is, what do they do with it, how do they expand it? And there Jackson has succeeded to a surprising degree.

His appeal to working people—he is the most pro-union candidate in recent memory—did not always translate into votes but won him very real respect even from many who cast their ballot for another candidate. In Iowa, it is clear that he had an appeal to farm families in small communities that saw few blacks. And, more predictably, he succeeded very well with the new-class vote in the college towns and urban centers.

Third, Jackson has broken some racial barriers. Let there be no mistake about it, there was a "backlash," particularly in some of the later primaries. But what is remarkable is that in every state Jackson significantly increased—and sometimes doubled—his percentage of the white vote in 1984. When the campaign began, even though I supported Jackson I felt that the racism of the society would limit him much more than it did in fact. And one of the reasons why he succeeded in this area is that his social democratic class appeal reached across color lines, in some cases moving even former George Wallace voters.

I have thought for some time now that Jackson may in many ways be a precursor on the model of Al Smith in 1928. Not so much in the sense that Smith prepared the way for Jack Kennedy by being the first to challenge the Catholic barrier, but rather in the sense that Smith was the first to rally the Roosevelt coalition and particularly the urban working class. Jesse Jackson's 1988 campaign, I suggest, may well be the first political movement of the 1990s as well

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Jesse Jackson gains support from New York's Hispanic leaders. (Donna Binder/IMPACT VISUALS)

as a significant step toward the possibility of a black president.

But why, if all these positive things can be said about Jackson, are there a significant number of excellent people who agree with his program but refuse to support him?

To begin with, Jackson has had a somewhat mercurial career. In 1980, for instance, he emphasized black capitalism, not a social democratic approach to full employment, and was critical of the Kennedy jobs plank at the Democratic Convention. And there is the problem that he has never held elective office, legislative or executive, which is a serious consideration when one thinks about the next president of the United States.

Second, there was the impact of the "Hymietown" remark in 1984. I do not read that incident as proof of some underlying and virulent anti-Semitism. I think—and I am proceeding on intuition not insider's knowledge—that Jackson spoke in the accents of a racism that was part of his early milieu and that he should have long since transcended. I also think that he sincerely, if belatedly, tried to make amends and, for reasons of pragmatism in a society in which race is still a potentially explosive issue, as well as out of charity, he should be taken at his word.

The relationship with Louis Farrakhan raises much more serious questions than the "Hymietown" incident. Farrakhan is, after all, not an unthinking purveyor of "populist" (in this case, black populist) racial stereotypes. He is a principled, vigorous anti-Semite and quite probably deserves to be labeled a fascist. When I was coming to the conclusion that Jackson should be supported, his refusal to repudiate Farrakhan—even though he did indeed reject his specific remarks—made me hesitate more than anything else. Even now, it continues to bother me.

Why has Jackson been so reluctant to condemn Farrakhan straightforwardly? He says that it is a matter of Christian principle, of hating the sin but not the sinner. I take that seriously. Martin Luther King, Jr., after all, used to insist that the movement not hate its tormenters and he was severely attacked for that attitude by the Panthers and the militants from SNCC in the year or so before his assassination.

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At the same time, there are obviously political—and very secular—considerations in Jackson's stance toward Farrakhan. The cynical version of this thesis is that he is motivated by the desire to retain every last bit of political support in the black community and refuses to alienate even a Farrakhan for opportunistic reasons. A more complex theory, which I find more cogent, is that, even though he is appalled by Farrakhan, he sees a public denunciation of him, particularly a public denunciation in response to white demands, as a way of breaking the solidarity of an oppressed group. Before the recent ferment in American Jewry, I sometimes encountered a similar view on the part of people who shared my criticism of, say, Begin's policies but did not want to voice their opposition outside of the family for fear of being taken as opponents of Israel. I didn't like that attitude any more than I do Jackson's, but it cannot be dismissed as opportunism.

But even though I was very much put off by the refusal to denounce Farrakhan, I had to decide whether that was more important than what was to be gained by a multiracial, social democratic candidacy. I made the political judgment that it was not, even as I recognized that those who disagreed with me could do so honestly and with great political seriousness.

Finally, there is the issue of Israel itself. It has been a central question for me ever since, in 1948, I became an ideological labor Zionist. At the same time, I have long believed that the Palestinians, like the Jews, have the right to national self-determination and that the only solution to the conflict is a negotiated settlement that would recognize two states. When I decided to support Jackson, I knew that he had come to this point of view but I assumed that he had originally been a partisan of the PLO, a belief based in large part on the famous photograph of him embracing Yasir Arafat. I was wrong on this last count. It turns out that Jackson had a solid point of view even when he met with Arafat.

The *Village Voice* recently reprinted some Associated Press accounts of that meeting that corroborate Jackson's own version of the event. He met with Arafat at the urging of Anwar Sadat and he told the PLO leader that he should recognize the right of Israel to exist and negotiate a peace with it on the model of the Egyptian-Israeli treaty. Indeed, the AP quoted a PLO leader who attacked Jackson for being, in effect, an Israeli agent.

But I do not want to end this comment on a defensive note. Jesse Jackson, for all the questions that can legitimately be raised about him, has mobilized the victims of racism in an interracial coalition based on principled opposition to injustice and class rule and in favor of a social democratic alternative. That is an enormous, historic accomplishment, which should reverberate well beyond 1988. The Jackson campaign is, in short, the first social-political movement of the nineties and I am proud to have been a part of it. □

Irving Howe

A MIXED RESPONSE

The best thing Jesse Jackson did during the Democratic primary was to name the problems. He was the one Democratic candidate who stressed that there are serious social wrongs in the United States requiring more than superficial treatment. He offered a program roughly akin to that of the liberal-left. He brought the black community to a high point of enthusiasm. He acknowledged the needs of an important segment of the white working class. He raised hopes for survival among frayed remnants of the New Left. He enlisted as supporters a significant minority of the unions. He brought vividness to an otherwise bland campaign. For all of which he deserves credit.

There now exists a strong constituency behind Jackson and this changes the relationship of political forces within the Democratic party—as, to a lesser extent, within the country.

Behind Jackson's success there was the glaring failure of the traditional liberal and labor constituencies to play important roles in the Democratic primaries. The major liberal politicians stayed (or copped) out. The Lane Kirkland leadership of the AFL-CIO was barely heard from and not many

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Americans seemed to miss it. So there was a vacuum, and Jesse Jackson, through daring and hard work, filled it.

Were the Jackson constituency led by someone like Martin Luther King or A. Philip Randolph, or by someone like Julian Bond or David Dinkins, my response would be to cheer enthusiastically. Since its leader is Jesse Jackson, I find myself conflicted. I have grave doubts about Jackson as a serious presidential candidate or possible president and would raise questions about him as a plausible leader of a left-liberal movement.

Whether a postelection, organized movement will coalesce around Jackson, we don't yet know. If that happens, it must be asked: To whom is he accountable? That other Democratic candidates are not accountable to a structured constituency does not matter: first, because they have at least exposed themselves to the test of office and second, because they do not put themselves forward as leaders of an insurgent group or community. If there will, however, be a revived movement around Jackson, then we have to consider the points made by James Ridgeway in the *Village Voice* (April 29, 1986): "The politics of [Jackson's Rainbow Coalition] are confusing. The coalition itself doesn't set its own political agenda. Rather Jackson decides, then announces, his political line and the rest follow."

Once Jackson turned into a serious candidate, then the argument that he should be backed simply because he expressed a positive tendency became insufficient or evasive. It now became necessary to consider: Does he have a chance of winning the presidency? What kind of president might he be? His chance of winning has become an academic issue, but the second question merits reflection. While agreeing with the general thrust of his domestic policy proposals, I found it hard, in light of his record and stated opinions, to think of him as a man I wanted to be president. Now, this isn't the sort of question that has been at the forefront of thinking among people of the left; but perhaps it should have been.* We should by now have learned from hard experience that the quality and credibility of leaders is a crucial factor in politics. It is especially crucial in the American political system, where enormous power resides in the hands of the president. The Jackson program seemed attractive, the Jackson movement vigorous, but I feel uneasy about Jackson the leader. I could not give him the sort of trust that one should feel about the person one wants to have as president. Here are a few reasons:

- *A record of political instability:* An integrationist in the mid-1960s, Jackson became a proponent of a Booker T. Washington-like call for black self-reliance in the early 1970s. Until recently he spoke in behalf of "black capitalism," something hardly congruent with his politics in the 1988 primary. An apostle of Christian nonviolence, he has had kind words for such Third World dictators and candidate-dictators as Castro, Assad, and Arafat.

In 1978 Jackson offered "an alliance" of "mutual need" to the Republican party (*Washington Post,* July 22, 1985). The liberal columnist Mary McGrory wrote (*Washington Post*, July 22, 1985) that Jackson "went before the Republican National Committee members [in 1978] and promised that if they played ball with him, he would deliver blacks out of their 'bondage' to the Democrats."

- *Dealings with Libyan agents and some Arab groups:* In 1980, the Justice Department investigated whether Jackson should register as a foreign agent because a $10,000 contribution came from Khadafy's Libya to PUSH, his Chicago organization. Though PUSH conceded the contribution, the inquiry was dropped. A picturesque account of Jackson's fund-raising methods appeared in the *Washington Post,* October 11, 1979, where he is quoted as saying to an Arab group:

> By October 1 there will be no black leader left willing to come to the aid of the Palestinian cause, if there is not an immediate infusion of funds into the black community from Arab states. We will all learn to recite the alphabet without three letters, P-L-O.

Five days later, October 16, 1979, the Chicago *Sun-Times* ran a similar report. To my knowledge, Jackson has never denied these accounts.

- *God's messenger:* An article by Marie Syrkin in *Midstream* (Feb.–March 1988) quotes the *Los Angeles Times* (Sept. 1979) as reporting that Jackson, in explaining his Middle East intervention, called it part of a "Divine Plan." Jackson: "I've been blessed you see. I am a conduit . . . many ideas flow through and from me from the Lord . . . . I stand at the very center of moral power." Is this very different from Pat Robertson?

- *The Holocaust, Jews, etc.:* "Apartheid," Jackson is quoted as saying in the *Washington Post,* July 29, 1979, "is worse than Hitler. Hitler was a man for a season. Once he was exposed, he was rejected.

* Not in the forefront of thinking, but very often at the center of conduct. Those *Dissent* readers who have participated in one or another socialist group know that what often held members was the trust they could feel in the integrity, honesty, selflessness of leaders with whom they might on occasion disagree or even take to be inadequate in some respects. I need only mention the honored names of Norman Thomas and Michael Harrington.

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But apartheid is a system of legal extermination. . . ."

Ebony quoted Jackson in August 1984: "You see, before, historically, we did not spiritually unify blacks of different ideological persuasions. . . . This time we've involved the nationalists, whether it's Herb Daughtry or Farrakhan."

Speaking in July 1980 before an Arab group, Jackson said: "We have the real obligation to separate Zionism from Judaism. . . . Zionism is a kind of poisonous weed that is choking Judaism."

● *A recurrent bias:* In a discussion of black-Jewish tensions in an interview with the *New York Times,* April 16, 1988, Jackson gave as a reason for this tension: ". . .you also have a fundamental issue . . . like—I guess it was two months ago—when South Africa invaded Angola and it was really a South Africa and Israeli joint project."

There is no evidence that Israel participated in any "joint project" with South Africa in invading Angola. If Jackson meant to say that Israeli arms might have been used in that invasion, that again is rather curious, since South Africa has purchased arms from many other countries, including France and the Soviet Union. But Jackson does not speak of South African "joint projects" with those countries.

Readers will have noticed that many of these quotations from Jackson come from the late 1970s. Since then he may have "grown," as his defenders say, or he may have become more circumspect in public speech. But if Jackson is to be the leader and spokesman for a progressive constituency and is to be considered a potential president of this country, then I think it quite reasonable that such statements—there are others—be scrutinized.

Precisely because I have been a sharp critic of Israeli policies on the West Bank, I would be most uneasy if Jackson were president. I want to persuade the Israeli government to change its policies, I hope the Israeli people will elect another government; but I also know that Israel is surrounded by real enemies and must therefore maintain its military strength (for which American aid is crucial). Envisage, then, a situation in which Israel is with its back to the wall, as during the Yom Kippur war of 1973, and its fate depends on the decision of an American president—shall he send supplies needed for Israel's survival? I would not care to see that decision made by the man who said that Zionism is a "poisonous weed."

There remains the matter of Farrakhan. In the *New York Times,* April 16, 1988, Jackson said, "I renounce or repudiate positions, not people . . . . I seek to redeem people." I'm afraid this is disingenuous. The "positions" (anti-Semitic rant) came not from the air over Chicago but from a specific *person* in Chicago, Farrakhan; it is he who is responsible for those "positions"; and to repudiate the "positions" requires that the person advancing them also be repudiated. Why Jackson should refuse to repudiate this appalling bigot when it would be to his political advantage to do so, is a question I cannot answer. But it is not at all reassuring.

We have reached a point in American life (and one hopes in the history of the left) where a presidential candidate claimed as our own must not be shadowed by even the faintest suspicion of anti-Semitism. It's just too late for that sort of thing.

I have looked through a number of Jackson's earlier remarks about Jews. They are disturbing. Not exactly anti-Semitic, but contaminated by a kind of ignorant folk bias. Jackson seems to have believed for a long time that the Jews control the media, are exploiters of black tenants, and have abandoned the cause of civil rights. He has spoken all too loosely about "the Jews," as if they are a unified bloc always acting in concert. "Once we began to move up, the Jews who were willing to share decency were not willing to share power," he is quoted as saying in the *Washington Post,* August 21, 1979. Now, this may be true about *some* Jews (who, by the way, have names that could be cited); but when Jackson talked about "the Jews" he was falling back on a stereotype as unacceptable as Mayor Koch's "discovery" some time back that most blacks are anti-Semitic.

It has been said in defense of Jackson that many whites and Jews also make disparaging remarks about blacks. True; but they are not running for president. And at least as important, they aren't presenting themselves as leaders of a progressive or rainbow coalition. It has also been said that to raise these matters is "parochial." Untrue! Anti-Semitism is no more a "parochial" issue than is anti-black racism.

Let me advance a hypothetical case: A chap

Welcome Aboard

HAROLD MEYERSON has joined the editorial board of *Dissent.* A Los Angeles-based political consultant and writer, he is a frequent contributor to these pages, a columnist for the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, and a long-time member of the National Executive Committee of the Democratic Socialists of America.

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named Botch is running for high office. He is Jewish. He made the appalling remark a few years ago that New York is "Sambotown." And he refuses to repudiate his quondam associate, the Jewish fascist Meier Kahane. Can you imagine the roars of denunciation that would come from the left? The outrage that would be expressed by such periodicals as the *Nation* and the *Village Voice* (both of which enthusiastically endorsed Jackson)?

I want the political momentum set in motion by the Jackson campaign to continue. I feel close to many of the people working for him. Yet I cannot, in simple honesty, accord Jackson the trust a leader ought to have.

There is no quick or easy solution to this problem. We can hope for a calming of relations after the election. We can hope that those friends who say Jackson has "grown" will be proven correct. The first thing to hope for, meanwhile, is that Ed Koch will learn the value of at least occasional silence, take himself a long vacation, and allow New York City to choose its next mayor without his rancorous presence. □

Michael Walzer

WHY NOT JACKSON?

I am writing more than a month before the New Jersey Democratic primary, in which I shall not vote for Jesse Jackson. That would hardly be a fact worth mentioning except that large segments of the American left (including the Democratic Socialists of America, part of our own segment) have rallied to Jackson's support. Perhaps the rallying is an example of the kind of affirmative action that always leaves me uneasy: choose the minority candidate even when he or she isn't the best available candidate. But I shall assume that most leftists who support Jackson do so because they believe he is the best candidate. They think he represents a resurgent left and that his campaign has something of the quality of a political movement.

I see only a man, an entourage, and a highly mobilized but limited constituency. Certainly the man knows how to talk to his constituency. Traditions of oratory that go back to the popular preaching of the Reformation have survived and prospered in the black community and Jackson, though he is not a master of the tradition (as Martin Luther King, Jr. was), works hard and well within it. Since there is a sense in which Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas stood in the same tradition, it is possible to imagine Jackson as a leader of or, at least, a spokesman for the left. But Debs and Thomas (and King, too) stood in a moral and political as well as an oratorical tradition and they were genuinely committed to, even if they finally failed at, building a movement. Jackson is not similarly committed. He is a media politician, aiming at the mainstream, moving very fast. No doubt he has opinions of his own (about which more later), but his campaign positions come from his entourage. And, as with all the other media politicians, the members of his entourage are lucky if they can find time to explain to him what his positions are before they are made public.

Jackson's historical role is to establish, for the first time, a major black presence in the political mainstream. That is an important thing to do, and watching him on television—even more, watching the response he evokes among black Americans—I hope that he succeeds. He is capable of bringing hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of disenfranchised men and women into national politics. Their arrival will be a valuable experience, both for them and for their fellow citizens. The price for all this is Jackson's own arrival: a price the country can well afford to pay.

On his way to the mainstream, Jackson has been forced, again and again, to abandon his old opinions for the sake of his new positions. Here, too, I wish him well, for mostly the positions that his entourage provides are superior to the opinions that he once provided for himself. Jackson is the sort of leftist who gets better as he moves toward the center; he is improved by opportunism.

What kind of a leftist is he (or was he)? August Bebel once described anti-Semitism as the socialism of fools, and Jackson's opinions about the Jews (even today, when all he seems to believe is that Jews are inordinately powerful in American politics)

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and, more clearly, his opinions about Zionism, fit into a standard mold of left-wing foolishness—a compound of populist resentment and ideological illusion. Resentment and illusion come together in a certain kind of Third World politics. Over the years, Jackson has been either a defender of or an apologist for a wide range of revolutionaries-in-power—in Vietnam, Cambodia, Angola, Libya, Syria, and Cuba—and for a relatively more narrow range of revolutionaries-out-of-power, for example the PLO and the Salvadoran FMLN. I suppose that his intention is to endorse what he takes to be a global uprising against imperialist oppression. In fact, he speaks for new oppressors. What he says is often just silly, as in his much quoted concession about the infamous Pol Pot: "Sometimes the best of people do become cruel and repressive." But his statements, silly and not silly, hang together; they constitute a more or less coherent worldview in which liberal and democratic values have, to put it cautiously, no secure place.

Jackson is an enemy of American intervention in the Third World, and here I usually agree with him. But a leader of the left must often be brutally critical of regimes that he would nonetheless protect, if he could, against the Marines. Leaping to the ideological defense of every Third World state that is hostile to the United States, Jackson makes himself into the mirror image of all those right-wingers who leap to defend every Third World state that calls itself pro-American. I am wary of him for the same reason that I am wary of them: out of a suspicion that the apology for authoritarian ugliness abroad will one day infect politics at home.

The Democratic party has to deal with Jackson, find him a place, allow his positions (but not his opinions) into the platform, and, most important of all, reach out to his followers. But we on the left don't have to deal; we are too small; and he is not interested anyway. If we are looking for a leader, even for a speaker, we need to look for someone else. □

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Roy Medvedev

ETHNIC CONFLICT & GORBACHEV'S REFORMS

MOSCOW, MARCH 3, 1988

The disturbances in Kazakhstan in December 1986, the demonstrations by the Crimean Tartars in Moscow and those in the Baltic states in 1987–88, the incidents in Yakutia and Uzbekistan, the increased activity of the Russian "patriotic" association, *Pamyat* ("Memory"), the continuing emigration of Jews and ethnic Germans, and, finally, the current clash between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the fate of Nagorno-Karabakh—all these events attest unequivocally to ethnic problems having become more acute in the USSR. There is an obvious link between these problems and the process of *perestroika* (restructuring) now underway in our country. Only *glasnost* and democratization could have allowed the increased expression and understanding of many of the ethnic problems, which, for a variety of reasons, have accumulated here over the last several decades.

The obvious liberalization of the regime and the abatement of the powerful authoritarian-bureaucratic machine that had oppressed us all has revealed the complex sources of the dissatisfactions that had built up in various parts of the country. Liberalization has either stimulated or aggravated conflicts that existed previously but had not seemed especially significant, given the all-pervasive social injustice and corruption of the leadership. Calling on the country to take a more active and responsible role in resolving social and political problems, Gorbachev has also unwittingly encouraged the Soviet people to take actions like the demonstrations in Armenia in which hundreds of thousands participated.

This is not our most important ethnic problem but it is a complex one, deeply rooted in history. Nagorno-Karabakh was a small Persian principality with an Armenian population before it was incorporated into Russia in 1913. After the fall of tsarism, the Trans-Caucasus was for several years an arena not only of civil war but of bloody ethnic warfare. One example is the war between Armenia led by the Dashnak party and Moslem Azerbaijan for control of Nagorno-Karabakh, which the Armenian nationalists considered a part of Armenia and the Azerbaijanian nationalists a part of Azerbaijan. The victory of Soviet power in the Trans-Caucasus put an end to this bitter civil strife, which in some regions had cost the lives of 10–30 percent of the population. During the demarcation of ethnic districts that took place in 1923, several regions in Armenia with a preponderantly Azerbaijanian population became part of Azerbaijan under the name of the Nachikhevan ASSR. However, Nagorno-Karabakh, whose population was 90 percent Armenian, remained a part of Azerbaijan and was given only the status of an ethnic province.

Unfortunately, discrimination in Nagorno-Karabakh was quite frequent. Under Soviet rule, the population of Armenia increased threefold and that of Azerbaijan more than twice. At the same time, there was only a slight increase in the population of Nagorno-Karabakh and that in favor of the Azerbaijanians. During the last sixty years the number of Armenians in the province has decreased from 142,000 to 136,000, that is, from 94 to 76 percent of the province's population. The Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh suffered certain encroachments on their economic and cultural interests: they were not even able to receive television broadcasts from Yerevan. Problems arose for practicing Armenian Christians, though there were also problems for practicing Azerbaijanian Moslems. For a long time those problems were ignored by both Baku and Moscow, causing legitimate dissatisfaction in Armenia, whose people were the first in the twentieth century to experience genocide and for that reason are painfully sensitive to all forms of ethnic injustice.

The Western press frequently publishes assertions that ethnic harmony in the USSR has proved to be a "myth of Soviet propaganda." Those assertions are

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mistaken. There are more than one hundred peoples and ethnic groups in the Soviet Union, and their economic and cultural cooperation, their mutual friendship and respect are not a myth. The formation of a new historical, social, and international community commonly referred to as the "Soviet people" is a reality. My father is Russian, my mother Jewish; I married a Ukrainian woman and my son recently married an Armenian. On the holidays old friends gather at my house and they include Georgians, Estonians, Azerbaijanians. Community is no myth but the reality of our daily life.

However, the claim that there are no serious ethnic problems or conflicts in the USSR is a myth and an extremely harmful one at that. Those conflicts do exist in ever-increasing number. As we know, the ethnic or national question always held an extremely important place in the ideology of Leninism, as was only natural for a country like Russia with its many ethnic problems. All the Russian revolutionary parties recruited followers from among non-Russians, but the Bolsheviks with their ethnic program were the most successful in this regard. Without the support of the Latvians, Estonians, Finns, Poles, Georgians, Armenians, Jews, Tartars, Volga and Crimean Germans, Chechens, Ingush, Bashkirs, and even Hungarians and Chinese, the Bolsheviks could not have won the Civil War and created the Soviet Union.

In the 1920s, the Communist party paid a great deal of attention to ethnic problems, which were discussed at nearly every party congress. At that time definite mechanisms existed for studying and resolving ethnic conflicts. However, in the early 1930s, Stalin declared that the ethnic problems in our country had been resolved "fully and completely" and that a Soviet culture had been created, "national in form and socialist in content." From then on the Soviet press has written only about ethnic harmony and we have had no mechanism for the study and resolution of ethnic conflicts. Powerful organizations for combating "bourgeois nationalism" have, however, been retained. This, too, is one of the reasons for the aggravation of ethnic conflicts currently observable in the USSR.

The Soviet press reports on the normalization of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, but the problem has not been solved, only postponed. In some respects it has even grown more severe, as demonstrated by the tragic events in the Azerbaijanian city of Sumgait. Unfortunately, *glasnost* has been one of the casualties of the ethnic conflict in the Trans-Caucasus, just as it was during the first ten days after the disaster at Chernobyl. Soviet newspapers are not reporting anything about the mass demonstrations in Yerevan or about the visits there by such Soviet leaders as Dolgikh, Razumovsky, Lukyanov, and Demichev. We have not even been able to read Gorbachev's appeal to the Armenians and Azerbaijanians or a report of his meeting with representatives of the Armenian intelligentsia. We know nothing about the declaration made by the Catholicus, the Patriach of the Armenian church, just as we have no details about the scope of the "excesses" in Sumgait.

Do recent events in the area of ethnic relations pose a threat to Gorbachev's policy and reputation? Those events do, of course, represent a serious test of the current policy of reform. In the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, Moscow is acting as an arbiter in a very difficult dispute, which tests the current

To Our Contributors:

A few suggestions:

(1) Be sure to keep a copy of your ms—the mails aren't always reliable. And please remember that we can't return articles unless they're accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article.

(3) Type your ms *double-spaced*, with *wide* margins. Check all your figures, dates, names, etc.—they're the author's responsibility. No dot matrix submissions, *please*.

(4) Notes and footnotes should also be typed double-spaced, on a *separate* sheet. As we're not an academic journal, we prefer that they, wherever possible, be dropped altogether or worked into the text.

(5) We're usually quick in giving editorial decisions. If there's a delay, it's because a few editors are reading your article.

(6) Please bear with us—we have accumulated quite a backlog of material, and you may have to wait for a few issues before you see your article in print.

THE EDITORS □

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leadership's ability to find a just and intelligent solution to a problem that is a legacy of the past.

In my opinion, the people of Nagorno-Karabakh should hold a referendum, as provided for by the Soviet constitution. Its results should then be discussed by the Supreme Soviets of Armenia and Azerbaijan. In the event that no agreement can be reached, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR or the Soviet of Nationalities should meet in session to conduct a detailed examination of the problem. The Soviet leadership may yet find a way to an intelligent and relatively painless solution. I continue to be disturbed by the paucity of *glasnost,* the lack of information on these events. Yet I continue to hope that intelligent solutions will be found to the current ethnic problems and the problems of *glasnost* and democracy.

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD LOURIE □

Daniel Chirot

ROMANIA: CEAUŞESCU'S LAST FOLLY

We know about Stalin's and Hitler's great crimes, the sycophantic Red monarchy of Kim Il Sung, and the bloody purges of the former French lycée teacher of Tirana, Enver Hoxha. More attention should be paid to another European example of this genre, now spinning out the last years of a grotesque reign, Nicolae Ceauşescu of Romania.

For the unsuspecting traveler, winter in Bucharest is an unnerving experience. There are almost no taxis or private automobiles. At night, most streets are unlit. Inside buildings there is virtually no heat. Weak light bulbs barely light up rooms where the temperature hovers at about 50 degrees, falling lower when gas and electricity are turned off, as they often are. Elevators in ten-story apartment buildings are avoided lest they get stuck. There is no meat, there are lines for every basic necessity, and the terribly crowded, overburdened public transportation system is breaking down.

Yet in 1970 Bucharest was better off. Then there were new freedoms, a dawning automobile age, restaurants with food, plenty of heat, increasing prosperity, and a taste for openness in literature, even in politics. Ceauşescu enjoyed a limited but very real popularity for having won a small degree of independence from the USSR and for having allowed Romania to reopen contact with the West.

Even in rural areas and in small towns in the early 1970s there was a certain welcome prosperity. The peasants were almost reconciled to the forced collectivization of the late 1950s and early 1960s. New roads and electrification were bringing the most remote villages into the modern world, and if the lovers of old Romania thought it a pity that store-bought clothing, better health, social mobility, television, universal literacy, and an end to confining superstitions were going to ruin that beautiful folk culture, they were a minority defending an obsolete order.

What went wrong? Even in the early 1970s there were signs, but few saw them at the time. For one thing there was that peculiar Ceauşescu obsession with population. Since 1966 abortion and contraception had been illegal and most grounds for divorce abolished. The country needed more people, said Ceauşescu, and he meant to have them. Some said it was to ensure the survival of a Latin outpost in a sea of Slavs, but more likely it was the wish to have a plentiful supply of young workers. These laws led to cruel dilemmas for many young urbanites. Unwanted children, secret botched abortions, and the miserable prospect of living with an unwanted spouse for many years were common. The housing shortage made all this much worse. But, at least, by the early 1970s, people had begun to adapt. The birth rate was falling again; illegal abortion rings had developed; the growing stock of housing created more options.

Another sign in the early 1970s seemed more amusing than sinister. That was the increasing attention paid to the Daco-Romans and Dacians, the supposed ancestors of modern Romanians. The pseudohistory and pseudosociology of the prewar fascist intellectuals were once again in favor—racial purity; unbroken historical tradition; one people, one

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folk. This was the nonsense spread by Octavian Goga, a poet who had been Hitler's hireling in Romania, and Lucian Blaga, an obscurantist philosopher who claimed special virtues in Romania's "peasantness." Once ignored by the Communist regime, they were now posthumously rehabilitated. And a program for destroying Hungarian culture in Transylvania was begun. As Romania's major ethnic minority, the 1.5 to 2 million Hungarians were particularly vulnerable to the rebirth of Romanian xenophobia, whereas the Jews and Germans, important links to the West, were better treated and usually allowed to emigrate.

Ceauşescu's plan was to create a modern, united Romania that would be a world-class producer of all the main industrial products—steel, automobiles, heavy machinery, petrochemicals, and much else. Even the Russians warned him that his Stalinist vision couldn't be achieved in such a small country. That was the cause of the conflicts with the Soviet Union, not any incipient liberalism.

By 1973, it was all beginning to go wrong. The rising young technocrats did not respect old party loyalties, and Ceauşescu became suspicious of their Western orientation. To favor them meant to undercut his base in the old apparatus. He began to curtail academic and intellectual freedoms and to demand greater personal loyalty. He also began to rotate important officials through a bewildering series of jobs to make sure they would never build a base of their own.

These measures lessened efficiency at the very time when the fundamental assumption behind all these plans was shown to be wrong. Part of the calculation was that Romania would be able to use its petroleum resources as a source of cheap energy. When it turned out that there was not enough available, Ceauşescu made friends with the Shah of Iran and planned to import cheap oil. Industrial exports, he calculated, would pay for the import of raw materials. But it was in 1974 that the price of oil began to go up, and in any case the quality of Romania's industrial production was far too low to compete in world markets except in a few light-industry sectors. Once Ceauşescu's friend in Iran was overthrown, matters worsened. (The two must have recognized a common, shared megalomania, as do Ceauşescu's other great international friends, Kim Il Sung and Richard Nixon.)

As the gap between promise and reality grew, and his popularity fell, Ceauşescu turned to an ever narrower circle, primarily to his family. His wife, Elena, was proclaimed a scientific genius and given control over all cultural activities. (When she travels to the West, Romanian embassies are charged with obtaining honorary degrees for her, and a few institutions with no self-respect can always be rounded up for such purposes.) His brother Ilie, who fancies himself a great military historian, was promoted to general and installed as watchdog over the army. Nicolae himself became the object of a cult of personality of inane proportions. He monopolized the news, gave instructions to peasants, students, and workers about how to perform their jobs, and acquired semidivine omniscience.

By the winter of 1978 the night lights of Bucharest were already dimmed, and those in party posts were afraid to meet old Western friends. Laws limited contacts with foreigners. Fantastic statistics were published trumpeting extraordinary economic successes.

In 1979 I attended a conference of American and Romanian historians in Cluj, the old capital of Transylvania. There Ilie Ceauşescu delivered a harangue about Romania's 2,050 years of struggle for independence, and the Americans listened respectfully, fawning on the strutting little general because, they said, it was important to "keep one's options open and maintain access."

Two-thousand fifty years ago there were indeed people called Dacians in most of what is now Romania. Their language, presumably part of the Thracian family, is unknown. Whoever they may have been, they were entirely submerged by the next fifteen centuries of migrations. The language the Romanians speak is a mixture of old Latin and old Slav modernized by nineteenth-century intellectuals who borrowed from French. There were no identifiable independent Romanian political entities until the twelfth or thirteenth century, though there have certainly been shepherds in the Carpathians speaking a form of Slavicized Latin since the seventh and eighth centuries. Just as there is little doubt that the conquest of the area by the Romans in the second and third centuries left a deep cultural mark on the country, so is it certain that almost nothing that preceded the Romans has left any trace at all. Yet, the Ceauşescu regime has resurrected this Dacian myth, once a favorite of extreme nationalist and fascist intellectuals in prewar Romania, to promote loyalty to the regime. He is portrayed as the liberator the Romanians have been seeking for two millennia. In all this, Marxism plays a very marginal role.

In 1982 the situation worsened again. Faced by the same debt crisis that afflicted Poland and Latin America, Ceauşescu decided to pay off Romania's debts at an accelerated pace. He wanted Romania to

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develop ever more quickly and to become totally independent, not only of the Russians, but of Western bankers, too. So he continued his policy of frenetic investment, squeezing his population harder to increase exports of the only things the outside world really wants to buy from Romania, light consumer goods and food. To further improve the trade balance, he also cut down on fuel imports, but this was not supposed to affect heavy industry.

Finally, Ceauşescu launched a project he had been planning for a long time, the reconstruction of Bucharest. He wanted to create a modern wonderland, a legacy of what is now officially called Romania's "Epoch of Gold, the Epoch of Ceauşescu."

To have misplanned industrialization and gone into debt is not unique to Romania or even to communist regimes. But only Romania has tried to pay back its debts while simultaneously accelerating the old, failed plans. To be led by a mad old despot with grandiose dreams is not uniquely Romanian, either, but aside from Hoxha's Albania, Europe has seen nothing like this since the death of Stalin. All of Eastern Europe has done better. In their diversity, all these countries have problems, but none has seen its standard of living slip back to what it was at the height of Stalinism in the early 1950s. All except Albania offer more personal freedom and greater material benefits.

János Kádár of Hungary is known to have mocked Ceauşescu's habit of traveling with a food taster to prevent poisoning, and Bulgarian leaders, not usually noted for their sense of humor, laugh at the mention of Ceauşescu. As for the Russians, it has become clear that they no longer fear Romania's supposed independence. On the contrary, they hold it up to the other East Europeans as an example of what happens to those who try to become too independent.

Undoubtedly enraged by his failures (there are rumors that his behavior is increasingly erratic and nasty), Ceauşescu launched his final great plan a few years ago—to level a wide swath of central Bucharest, over half a mile wide and perhaps ten miles long, and build in it a vast array of gleaming white office and apartment buildings, public halls and palaces, and great avenues. Wrecking cranes and tractors began moving in with only a few hours warning, ordering people in this most densely populated part of the city to pack up their belongings. Many who owned their houses and apartments were only minimally compensated. They were shipped out to tawdry new high-rise blocks on the distant outskirts of the city. Old churches and architectural gems were leveled. (Bucharest's old center had a charming elegance that, if did not match that of Paris, was at least substantially grander than Sofia's and a lot prettier than Belgrade's.) Huge resources were mobilized. But this was not all.

The little river Dimboviţa, which runs through the capital, has been rerouted to feed a canal and artificial lake designed to make Bucharest a major seaport. Already, a useless Black Sea–Danube canal has been finished. (Both the wartime fascist government and the early Communist government had sent political prisoners to work on it).

Investment in heavy industry continues. Women are constantly badgered and forced to undergo medical exams to test for pregnancy, in order to increase the birth rate. Lesser "urbanization" projects exist in minor cities, too, including a plan to tear down peasant houses built during the relative prosperity of the 1960s and early 1970s and replace them with modern blocks that will have only one bathroom per floor. Shortages continue to get worse each year, and each winter there is less heat, less electricity, less food, less transportation, and more words.

Though Bucharest is still a very large city with close to two million people, after dark there is almost no traffic noise. But in the center, the giant construction project goes on under powerful lights. During the day, the huge swath cut out of the city is a surrealistic terrain of noise and dust with thousands of workers and hundreds of machines crawling about, mingling indiscriminately with ordinary citizens, who must make their way through this creation. The city has been cut in half so that it is impossible to go from one side to the other without crossing the project. The work site of the pyramids might have looked like this. What a colossal, stupid, vainglorious waste! How could leaders subject so many of their people to such toil for the sake of personal vanity? But if the thinking of the ancient Egyptians eludes us, Ceauşescu's does not. This project will overshadow all his failures and make him an immortal.

Some of it is completed. Solid phalanxes of buildings stand in neat rows, on average some ten to twelve floors high. The corners are rounded; they have façades with false columns, fake arches on top, and heavy balconies. They are brightly white. The style is 1930s Mussolini.

Ceauşescu likes symmetry. He frequently inspects the work site and the plans. He makes changes. He sees that an existing tram line entering the project is

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crooked, so he orders more buildings torn down to straighten the tram tracks. He screams at the architects, spits with contempt at what he doesn't like, and has new constructions destroyed if he doesn't like what he sees. A new subway line has been built, with gleaming escalators going into it. But a few blocks away, older escalators built in the 1970s are already broken and unused. Construction more than five years old is starting to fall apart.

At night, people huddle in their cold apartments, often turning on the kitchen stove to try to warm themselves. When the gas, too, gets cut off, there is a danger. If they have fallen asleep, the gas may come back on and poison them before they are aware of what is happening. This has happened often enough to produce the sickest of the large crop of sick jokes now circulating in Bucharest: "What is the difference between Hitler and Ceauşescu? Hitler used to kill people by turning on the gas. Ceauşescu, just the opposite."

There is more to this than simply bad economic planning. Ceauşescu's megalomania has clearly become mixed with deep resentment that his plans have not worked. Like Hitler, who also planned to rebuild his capital, he has come to hate his people for letting him down. Much of the forced saving in electricity and heat is of no real use. Economists who study Romania believe that there must also be an element of personal vengeance in it.

Why are there no protests? There are. Few get into newspapers, though recent strikes and violent demonstrations in Braşov did come to the attention of the American press. But even with this, the level of protest is insignificant compared to what might have been expected from Poles, Hungarians, or even Czechs and East Germans had they been subjected to such a monstrous regime. As it is, when workers protest, they have no organization or leaders, and so each disturbance is treated separately. More food is rushed into the affected area, the potential worker leaders are jailed or shot, temporary wage concessions are made, and the event is isolated.

On Sundays the churches are full, but Romanian orthodoxy made its peace with the regime a long time ago. The only time it played a political role in the twentieth century was in the 1930s, when many young priests joined the fascist Iron Guard. There is enough in common between the Guardists' ideology and Ceauşescu's to satisfy many in the Church. Romanians who seek greater solace are converting to illegal Protestant fundamentalist sects.

What about the intellectuals? They once liked Ceauşescu because of his nationalism. Now, most of their privileges have been removed, but they have generally bowed their heads quietly, hoping to keep a choice apartment or the right to travel to the West every so often and eventually, when things get too bad, to escape. That small escape valve, to which only high officials and top intellectuals have access, accounts for much of their passivity. Half of the friends I had in the 1970s have escaped, and most of the others are too frightened or ashamed to answer letters.

Without priests, intellectuals, or dissident Marxists or party members to help them, protesting workers are no better off than the old Romanian peasants, who also used to rise in rebellion from time to time.

How will all this end? When the terrible old man dies there will be a struggle between the forces of sanity and the surviving Ceauşescu family members. They are so universally loathed that no one gives them much chance of survival. But who knows? There are so few alternate leaders available that Elena Ceauşescu or favored son Nicu could take power for a time.

The open question is the attitude of the Soviets. As Romania has sunk into economic chaos, the percentage of its trade with the USSR has risen sharply, because increasingly it is the only source of many raw materials. In return, the Soviets have been setting up special deals with enterprises in Romania capable of delivering the semifinished industrial products they need. To ensure quality, they deal directly with these enterprises and send experts to manage them. Gorbachev is popular with the intellectuals, especially since he was publicly

Into the Depths

Each issue of *Commentary* strikes a new low in intellectual vulgarity and political reaction. In the May 1988 issue there appears an article, "Israel and the Intellectuals" by Ruth R. Wisse, with the following sentence: "The obvious key to the success of the Arab strategy is the presence, in the disputed territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of the Jordan River, of Palestinian Arabs, people who breed and bleed and advertise their misery." This remark, verging on or crossing into racism, is an instance of that dehumanization of the adversary that has been a curse of our century.

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snubbed by Ceauşescu during his visit to Bucharest last spring. The Soviets certainly do not want a total economic collapse, because they would have to pick up the pieces and rush in aid. So they are carefully working with the regime, reestablishing tight economic links, and undoubtedly keeping their eyes on certain key people for the future.

Not the least of the ironies of the Ceauşescu regime is that when it ends, the Russians will regain greater control than they have had since the early 1950s, but, this time, all of Romania will welcome them. They are the only ones who can help, and Romanians have long ago given up any hope that the West will provide any significant political, economic, or even moral support against their loathed leader, who continues to be one of the American State Department's favorite Communist leaders.

As for the great building project in Bucharest, it will never be finished. Romania cannot afford it. Eventually, the half-constructed parts will be finished, and much of the rest will be left as empty lots to be abandoned to dust and weeds, standing next to the neofascist architectural monuments that will be bitterly mocked. By the end of the century, they will begin to crumble, the new canals and artificial port will be choked with silt and garbage, and Bucharest will have turned, indeed, into a monument to the catastrophe that one unconstrained madman can inflict on society, a living reminder of the "Epoch of Gold, the Epoch of Ceauşescu." □

Arthur R. Kroeber

INDIA'S DEMOCRACY —STRAINED BUT STABLE

The fortieth anniversary of India's independence, on August 15, 1987, passed with relatively little fanfare, even in India. There was a small parade in New Delhi; Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi gave a long dull speech lampooned by pundits for its inelegant Hindi; and the capital was festooned with miniature Indian flags—minus the *chakra*, or wheel, in the white center stripe, and hung sideways, prompting one newspaper to note that they looked more like Irish than Indian flags.

The commemorative newspaper articles were apocalyptic. The Indian state, we were told, is dying; institutions are decadent and rife with corruption; the politics of religion and caste threaten the foundations of the secular polity; the spirit of the freedom fighters has been lost.

One would hardly have guessed, amidst this relentless self-criticism, that India has been a working democracy for four decades (barring the two years of Indira Gandhi's Emergency, 1975–77). Indians and foreigners alike, accustomed to judging a democracy on how closely it imitates the British or American prototypes, have missed an important point: that Indian democracy has succeeded because it has (often inadvertently) made traditional religious concepts and stereotypes play a role in modern secular politics.

India is the world's largest democracy, and its poorest. The number of votes cast in India's last general election—235 million—exceeded the total population of the United States. And although national politics has always been dominated by the Congress party and its first family of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi, India is not a one-party state. Opposition parties control nine of the twenty-five state governments and are likely to make further gains in the next few years.

But with a per capita GNP of $270, literacy of 36 percent, and an average life expectancy of fifty-six years, India ranks far behind all other democracies in affluence. This poverty, along with the hierarchical caste system and the incredible variety of religions and languages on the subcontinent, were reasons why many in 1947 thought democracy for India was a foolish dream. But it was not, and one reason was that religion and caste have been co-opted into the political arena, where they have played a key role in both subtle and obvious ways.

The obvious ways hardly been repeating: the subcontinent was partitioned on religious lines and India's rivalry with Islamic Pakistan remains the

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largest threat to regional peace; India has four major religious communities, including the world's fourth-largest Muslim population; militant Sikhs have bloodied the Punjab for five years in a quest for a separate, religiously based state.

These familiar images suggest religion as a destructive force, one that flushes reason out of politics and pollutes it with violence and hate.

But any analysis of the role of religion in Indian politics that stops there will fall far short of the mark. As a young political scientist said to me last year in Calcutta, "Communalism is a form of Indian politics. If you say that, people think you're saying something reactionary. But it's not. It's simply that if you approach Indian politics from a Western point of view, it looks like everything is going wrong. I don't think it is—the idea that you can separate religion from politics in India is a dream. In India, religion *is* politics."

Last year was a year of big stories in India—continued violence in the Punjab, the country's worst drought of the century, Indian intervention in the Sri Lankan civil war. But for the Indian media, the biggest story was a series of corruption scandals in Gandhi's government.

The main scandal centers around reports that various Indian agents, and possibly members of the government, received kickbacks from the Swedish armaments manufacturer Bofors in return for assuring that company a major howitzer contract. The allegations have simmered for more than a year without much concrete evidence emerging; Bofors officials admitted that "winding-up payments" were made, but to middlemen in Europe, not to Indian nationals, companies, or government servants. The splintered parliamentary opposition (Gandhi's Congress (I) holds 415 of the 542 lower-house seats; the largest opposition party has 28) has steadily inveighed against the corruption of the Gandhi government and has even insinuated, without a shred of proof, that Gandhi himself was paid off. Gandhi, never a shrewd operator, damaged himself by dragging his feet in the investigation and by apparently authorizing a campaign of harassment against the most vocal opposition newspaper, the *Indian Express*.

In the absence of evidence, "corruption" has become a metaphysical bogeyman, a supposed all-pervasive contaminant of the Indian state (corruption is, of course, endemic in India, but the notion that Gandhi invented it is absurd). The leader of the anticorruption drive is Vishwanath Pratap Singh, minister for finance and then for defense until Gandhi ousted him from the Cabinet and the Congress (I) in April 1987. After his dismissal, Singh shaved off his mustache and claimed to have abandoned all political ambition in favor of waging a "crusade against corruption."

To this end he and several allies, mostly expelled Congressmen, set up a "Popular Front" (*Jan Morcha*). It is not a party: anyone from any party who opposes corruption and Rajiv Gandhi can join. It is a sort of brotherhood of the pure.

By this April the *Jan Morcha* appeared to be on the brink of engineering a merger of four opposition parties into a new National People's party, which will contest the next parliamentary elections. Those elections will be held in late 1989, though it is remotely possible that Gandhi will call a snap poll before then. Either way, polls show Gandhi is likely to be returned, though with a smaller majority.

It is not clear what Singh has to offer, other than opposition to Gandhi, whose technocratic appeal has worn thin. Singh has sought support at various times from both the Communist parties and the ultra-rightist *Bharatiya Janata* (Indian People's) party, which favors a Hindu state. He has no program, no ideology, no constituency outside of a section of the Hindi-speaking north. He has only a quasireligious principle: the battle of the honest against the corrupt, the pure against the impure.

By disclaiming any desire for office, Singh is exploiting an old Indian tradition: that of the world-renouncer. Mahatma Gandhi was the first to give this religious stereotype a political context—the man who renounces the world in order to change it—and since then the renouncer has been a distinctive feature of the Indian political landscape.

Jaya Prakash Narayan (on whom Singh has clearly modeled himself) was the epitome of this stereotype. After a fifteen-year absence from politics spent doing social work, he returned in 1974 calling for a vaguely defined, Gandhian "total revolution" to sweep out Indira Gandhi. This led to the Emergency. Narayan later became the backstage power of the disastrous Janata coalition that replaced Indira Gandhi in 1977, a regime whose two-year reign of error exposed the futility of basing a government on an essentially negative religious principle.

Lack of Opposition Program

The reason the opposition always resorts to such sweeping, contentless offensives is that it has no choice. The Congress party, which rose to power on the strength of its monopoly of the independence movement, includes virtually the entire ideological spectrum, from moderate socialists to hidebound Hindu revivalists and orthodox Muslims to conservative big industrialists. Pedigree counts for a lot in India, and despite the party's decay into a network of

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vested interests and its departure from Gandhi's vision and Nehru's statesmanship, Congress can still represent itself as the avatar of India's nationalist aspirations and the only binding force in a land of four major religions, fifteen official languages, and thousands of castes.

Among the opposition parties, the Communist party of India (Marxist), which controls two state governments and until recently held a third, is the most obvious alternative. But communism's appeal to urban middle-class intellectuals has meant that it has, in general, drawn its cadres from the Brahmins and other upper castes. In the parts of rural India where exploitation is greatest and the potential for Communist support seemingly the largest, the Communists have been unable to distinguish themselves from the upper-caste exploiters of the peasantry. Despite tight organization and massive efforts, the CPI(M) has yet to become a truly national party. The multifarious other parties represent the separate interests of various castes, religions, and regional groups and have no common ground on which to base a lasting coalition.

The fragmented opposition is usually regarded as a failure of Indian democracy. But one could as easily claim it as a reflection of democracy's success in encouraging local interests to organize themselves on party lines.[1]

Politics, in the broadest sense, is the clash of competing interests. In the West we are accustomed to seeing interest groups as economic classes, loosely speaking, and most people identify themselves readily in class terms—as "working class," "farmers," "businessmen," "professionals," and so on.

In India this is not true. People at all levels of society still identify themselves primarily on caste lines or, if they are not Hindus, by their religious affiliation. It is only natural that these groups should form the basis of political associations.[2]

Although a few large castes cut across geographical and in some cases linguistic lines, most are small and local. Because of this, and because a caste's status in the social hierarchy need not coincide with its economic position, "class consciousness" hardly exists in India. The only political strategies that work, therefore, are narrow local ones—representing a particular group of castes or a language group—or broad ones relying on almost metaphysical slogans like "total revolution" and "crusade against corruption," which define politics as a struggle between good and evil.

To explain the apparent contradiction between a vibrant, caste-dominated local politics and the ideologically empty national politics of secular sloganeering, it is customary to posit a conflict between "modernity" and "tradition." This is usually referred to as the *Bharat*/India distinction, *Bharat* being the Sanskrit word chosen by independent India's founders to be the "Indian" name for India.

According to the *Bharat*/India school of thought, there are two Indias. The first is urban, modern, secular, English-speaking, enamored of Western-style democracy. The other India (*Bharat*, "the *real* India") is rural, traditional, speaks the various Indian languages, is largely illiterate, does not understand or care about modern political structures, and depends on the familiar comforts of religion and caste.

The problem with this view is that so-called "traditional" attitudes shape, in crucial ways, the so-called "modern" political institutions and discourse. Similarly, many evils ascribed to rampant "traditionalism"—Hindu-Muslim riots, intercaste violence—are at least partially the result of modern ideas and economic pressures.

An instructive example of the fallacy of the *Bharat*/India distinction was provided by the self-immolation last September of an eighteen-year-old widow on her husband's funeral pyre.

Although incidents of *sati*, or widow-burning, have occurred occasionally since the British outlawed the practice in 1829 under pressure from Hindu reformers,[3] this one was unusual in the reactions it inspired, both positive and negative. Roop Kanwar, the *sati*—who came from a middle-class family in a large town and had ten years of schooling, hardly qualifying her as an ignorant product of "traditional India"—was instantly glorified, and about a hundred thousand people streamed to her home town for a ceremony sanctifying her cremation ground.

In response, urban intellectuals and the English-language press indulged in an orgy of condemnation wholly out of proportion to the significance of the event. *Sati* worshippers were denounced as barbaric obscurantists determined to drag India back to the Middle Ages. Agitation started for a national ordinance against *sati* (superfluous since it is already illegal). Countless articles condemned the "social evil" of *sati* and called for remedies; much less attention was paid to the plight of women, and especially of widows, in Indian society, which is the real problem and which will take decades of hard work to rectify.

The hysteria over an aberrant, albeit horrifying, event seems ludicrous at first, but it is not if one forgets the simple modernity-tradition division. The intellectual reaction excluded all shades of opinion

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other than outrage; there was almost no dispassionate investigation of the history and social role of *sati* (the scholarly debate raged over whether the Vedas sanctioned the practice). In short, the reaction of "modern India" was a modified version of a classic Brahminical response: horror of the unclean action, which cannot be discussed or examined, only condemned.

Other examples abound. Every Westerner, and many an Indian, has a favorite story about how seemingly up-to-date Indians perpetuate caste distinctions. An Indian academic related to me the tale of his family doctor, who asked him to find out the caste of a former colleague, now a World Bank economist. The doctor was trying to arrange a marriage between his daughter and the economist's son, and he suspected the economist of being too low caste for his liking. "Of course we don't pay attention to caste," the doctor hastened to assure my friend, "but certain things are just impossible."

A few weeks later the doctor came for a visit; he had found out from another source that the economist was a Rajput (a high-status "warrior" caste). But the marriage was off anyway—he had seen a photograph of the economist's wife and thought her skin was too dark for her to be high caste.

The lesson usually drawn from such stories is that the psychology of "traditional" India is holding back the development of "modern" India. The proponents of this view, for example, V. S. Naipaul,[4] think of religion as a sort of disease to be eradicated by the liberal application of rationalism.

But in fact there is nothing destructive about most religious attitudes unless they become vehicles for the expression of economic exploitation. In that case it is the exploitation that needs to be eliminated, not the religion. Most of the "social evils" often attributed to religion and caste are really caused by poverty and competition for scarce resources and will be eliminated only with greater wealth and better education. What is needed is not the abolition of religion or its relegation to a hermetic box outside the political system, but its gradual transformation into a source of positive social energy. This is what many Indians mean when they talk about the need for recapturing the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi.

Over forty years India has slowly developed, and continues to develop, its own system of democratic politics, which is neither "traditional" nor "modern," but which is transforming the social affiliations of caste and religion into political ones. Precisely because religion and caste have found a place in India's politics, "fundamentalism" has never been a problem in India. "Fundamentalism" arises not when religion invades political life, but when it is excluded from it, when the political system fails to incorporate religious attitudes and stereotypes, and when social groups to whom religion appeals are denied a political voice.

The supposed barriers of religion and caste have not prevented India's economic growth: the country now feeds itself and ranked thirteenth in the world in industrial production in 1985.[5] The tasks ahead are formidable, but so are the achievements behind. There is still hope that India has the political means to grapple with its destiny. □

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Notes

[1] Much of the following discussion derives from M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1962), which remains the most perceptive introduction to the role of caste in Indian politics.

[2] An important detail is that there is a difference "between caste at the political level and caste at the social and ritual level." (Srinivas, p. 5.) The way in which castes have transformed themselves to become more effective political actors is discussed by Srinivas, pp. 15–41, and by Selig Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

[3] An excellent historical study of *sati* and its role in Indian society is in Ashis Nandy, *At the Edge of Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 1–31. Briefly, Nandy argues that *sati* is an aberration that occurs in "epidemics" at times when Hindu institutions are under attack.

[4] See V.S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), pp. 79–85; and *India: A Wounded Civilization* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), passim.

[5] The World Bank, *World Development Report,* 1987, p. 262.

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Glasnost Watch

Richard Lourie

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Sketchbook of a Soviet Journey

What strikes you first, and shocks you, is that no one knows how to work. In the land of the workers, people are at best semiliterate in labor. They work reluctantly, irritably, listlessly. Sheremetyevo Airport in Moscow is the gateway not only to the mystery of Russia but to the enigma of the Soviet economy as well.

The airport official overseeing the arrival of foreign tourists is a man of the Gorbachev era. Able, dynamic, in his early forties, he simply wants life to be better, to live in a "normal" society. This, he knows, is perfectly doable—in principle, as the Russians are extremely fond of saying.

The official winces at every instance of bumbling and inefficiency, which is to say he winces rather often. Touched by his sincerity, I try to reassure him that, for sheer chaos, Moscow's airport can't hold a candle to Rome's. And this does bring him a modicum of satisfaction, which lasts until the next snag arises. Working with modern calculators instead of the still prevalent abacuses, the young women at the currency exchange have made an error and the transaction must be repeated. Forms must be filled out again, resigned, restamped, refiled. Now he can stop wincing; the crisis is past.

No, it isn't. Three hours later there is a hysterical phone call to the Hotel Kosmos—both calculations were wrong because they were for some reason figured in pounds and not dollars. The money will have to be re-reexchanged.

The Kosmos Hotel is billed as Moscow's finest, and the fact that it was foreign-designed is flaunted with something of a perverse pride. Stalinesque in its grandiosity, dreary as Queens, the Hotel Kosmos is a madhouse that brings to mind Henry Miller's Cosmodemonic Telegraph Agency. Because of certain minor foulups, I have to change rooms after the first night. This allows me to compare bathroom sinks. Both are navy blue, and both are cracked in exactly the same place. Why are they both cracked in the same place? Or, more to the point, why are they even cracked at all?

A luxury hotel with cracked sinks? If this is the top, how deep the bottom must be.

* * *

The thought occurs to me again while traveling from Vilnius to Leningrad on a first-class sleeper. Four slats in a small, gray steel box, a flophouse mattress, sheets clean but old and tired, the bathroom another gray steel box that reeked of carbolic acid. Once again, for a second I suffered a sort of sociological vertigo, sensing the distance a Soviet citizen could fall.

Then the man in charge of our car makes tea from a samovar heated by coal that gives off a rosy, old-fashioned glow. The tea is served in glasses, in holders ornate as the Russian alphabet. The tea is strong, bracing. Now the snow and black trees racing by the window seemed to be making a sort of visual music, of Russia and railroads and winter. Russia still has its secret sweetnesses.

* * *

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Moscow's sidewalks are impacted with treacherous black ice. Perfect concentration is required to navigate them. The workers breaking up the ice with long steel poles seem to be waiting for spring to do their job for them.

"Under Stalin, the sidewalks were shoveled," sighs a Moscow poet with mock nostalgia. His wife had recently slipped on the ice and fallen, badly bruising her hip.

But the sidewalks were shoveled under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, so the reference to Stalin is meant to have symbolic rather than factual meaning. The intelligentsia enjoy seeing their lives played out against an operatic background of Russian history and in two weeks' time I heard more than one reference to the Mongol invasion of 1240. But the question still remains: Why are women falling on the sidewalks in the capital of a superpower that is contemplating a mission to Mars?

* * *

Stepping carefully, I walk behind three school chums, nine-year-old boys. They wear their little school cases on their backs, European style. The boy in the middle has a pear, and he's sharing it freely with his two friends. They are laughing and talking madly, stopping only to take a good munch of the pear. I smile at them, no longer in Russia but in the eternity of childhood.

Then, unbidden, certain statistics come to mind. The average salary is a ruble an hour. Pears cost eight rubles a pound. You get about two pears a pound. A man receiving an average salary must therefore work half a day so that his son may eat a pear.

Something about the happy chubbiness of the boy with the pear makes me think his father is doing better than average. So the reality must be that the Soviet Union is a country where the average worker's son simply does not eat a pear.

* * *

A story making the rounds of Moscow: A Japanese technician inspects a Soviet facility. The director asks the visitor, "How long do you think we'll be behind you?" The visitor looks around and answers, "Forever."

* * *

The country is collapsing, but the intelligentsia are excited, high on *glasnost* champagne. The level of public discussion has reached near "normal" limits, there is an air of intellectual freedom. There is nothing more beautiful to see than people enjoying newly won freedom. I am reminded of Poland in November 1981, in what turned out to be the twilight of Solidarity. The danger is, of course, that it can go to your head.

Gorbachev is truly liked and respected by the intelligentsia, who always refer to him warmly as "Mikhail Sergeyevich." With a look of genuine bafflement on her face, a woman in her sixties says, raising her glass: "I want to drink a toast to Mikhail Sergeyevich's health. And, you know, I have never drunk a toast before to any Soviet leader. Never."

And this was said by a woman who had recently been refused membership in the Writers' Union, one of a group of eight or ten that proved nearly entirely Jewish. She has two daughters who both live abroad. Her deepest wish is that the USSR have open borders, and she toasts that wish with tragic sincerity. The two toasts are of course connected. In Gorbachev she sees her dream of open borders.

Startlingly, a few days later a resolution is passed by the Supreme Soviet seeming to make travel a routine affair. But what does it really mean? Like everything else here, it will have to be decoded, tested.

* * *

"I'm being ruined as a writer!" exclaims the poet Oleg Chukhontsev pacing his old Moscow apartment in a dressing gown that has a nineteenth-century air to it (the mantle of Russian literature?). "All I do is read newspapers! Six or seven a day!"

The newspapers are the splashes of *glasnost* on the surface of daily life, the wave that might yet grow into a tsunami of history.

Only the press can keep pace with the change: Bukharin rehabilitated; treasure trove of diamonds and gold uncovered as Uzbekistan party officials are indicted for running criminal empire.

The newspapers have become a parliament

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of opinion. The newspapers are the opposition that has broken, as always, into various factions. You read *Sovetskaya Rossiya* to see what the rightists are thinking.

"It's an age of *publitsistika,*" says Chukhontsev, using one of those Russian words that are untranslatable simply because they refer to something we don't do. American newspapers do not publish long articles based on current events that also take a broader and more *engagé* point of view.

Discussing *glasnost* with a Leningrad intellectual, I adjust my pace to his, slow, with frequent turns and full stops to make important points. His favorite piece of recent *publitsistika* was an article called "Whose Pies Are Tastier?", which did everything but advocate capitalism.

I remark that Stalin isn't the problem, but Lenin. If the answer is to throw out the socialist economy created by the revolution, that means throwing out the revolution and Lenin.

"No," he says, "I would go even further back. To Marx. It is Marx who has to be thrown out."

"Too bad Marx didn't write anything on the transition from socialism to capitalism," I say.

He laughs, then pauses on the bridge over the Neva to point out the cathedral marking the spot where Tsar Alexander II was assassinated by bomb-throwing terrorists.

* * *

Soviet newspapers may be exciting but the situation with foreign newspapers is still abominable. For the English-reader the kiosks still offer only Canadian communist tabloids. On the other hand, *Moscow News*, published in English and other foreign languages and once the dreariest of sheets, has become so much a part of Moscow's vibrant intellectual life that there is now even a Russian edition.

The Sunday, March 6 issue contained an interview with Mikhail Misko, head of the Inturkart firm in Moscow, which is working with VISA to introduce credit cards into the USSR. There will be more than one type of card, depending on the currency of credit, ruble or hard. Misko concludes the interview by saying: "One other thing, we wouldn't want Muscovites to get the idea that the introduction of credit cards is compulsory. You decide if you want to use one or not."

Under Stalin credit cards would have been compulsory.

* * *

In Vilnius, the capital of Soviet Lithuania, the local intelligentsia nibble on matzoh while pining for the Jews. Once known as the Jerusalem of the North, Vilnius is no longer the city it once was—a high-minded tranquil backwater, a multi-ethnic city where a certain benign indifference created harmony among various peoples who did not live so much together as side by side.

The Lithuanian intellectuals with whom I met were the best of the breed—courtly, long-haired, warmhearted, fiercely pure. They felt compelled to tell me fairly soon in the conversation that Vilnius had been the site of a particularly "barbaric" act. In 1961, the Jewish cemetery was dug up and some of the gravestones had been used as building materials. Some had gone into the monuments to Lithuania's national heroes constructed after the war as a gesture to local pride. A single act, a double desecration.

Glasnost hasn't come to Lithuania yet, not to mention *perestroika*. The newspapers haven't changed. Things always come slowly to Lithuania. Staunchly Catholic, the Lithuanians also take pride in having been the last nation to accept Christianity, the last pagans in Europe, whose many gods are depicted in a new mosaic at the university. All the stones of various colors are solely from Lithuanian fields.

The Lithuanian strategy is to preserve what is essentially Lithuanian, as monks protected what was essentially Christian in the Dark Ages. Nobody expects the current Dark Ages to be over soon. "Not us, not our generation," says a twenty-year-old university student who is majoring in Lithuanian language and literature. "Maybe the next one. Maybe."

* * *

In Vilnius, a professor at the university says with the pride of a connoisseur: "I know two places that might have beer today." It is a simple enough sentence, though it does tend to boggle the American mind.

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The line at the first store proves too long—well over an hour. We zoom to the second in a Zhiguli, a stripped-down Soviet Fiat. The wait there looks like less than an hour, the best you can hope for. There's a Russian saying that goes: The two worst things in the world are waiting and trying to catch up. By that definition, nearly all of Soviet society is engaged in one or both of the two worst things in the world.

Distribution is a giant, shifting, mysterious force spilling out random jackpots of beer or sausage.

The beer is drunk later that evening at a table where the conversation is boisterous, rueful, witty. My host rises to retrieve something from the other room. It is a copy of Czeslaw Milosz's autobiography, *Native Realm,* the Polish edition published in Paris. He opens the cover and flutters the pages, which are all loose. "This book was sent to me a page at a time, enclosed in letters. I keep it that way."

As a relic from another age, a symbol of devotion to what is best, and a warning that what had often been the case could well be the case again.

* * *

"You must see this," said the Lithuanian historian, taking my elbow in a pincer grip. We enter a Vilnius courtyard through an arch that makes you duck your head instinctively. "Look," he says, pointing to the gold-brown Hebrew letters edged in black. "Aside from the temple, this is the last written trace of the Jews on the walls of the city."

I can tell by the Polish written above the Hebrew that this had once been a sign for an ordinary shop where things were made and sold. And perhaps that is why our silence is more genuinely reverential than it had been in front of Vilnius's sole surviving temple. Neither the historian nor I could read the Hebrew letters edged in black, which only made their dying sigh more audible.

* * *

"They must wait!" says a Moscow writer referring to the clamorous demands being made by the USSR's various ethnic groups. "Democratization has to move from the center out, from the top down. That's how it works here."

But people are tired of waiting. In 1946, Stalin exiled the entire nation of the Crimean Tartars, infants to aged, and they have been longing to return home for more than forty years. Gorbachev has raised their expectations and roused their impatience all at the same time. It is no secret that at a certain point ethnic tensions boil over into bloodshed. Blood has already been shed in Azerbaijan. There is blood in the air, just a tinge, but a sufficient reminder of the usual cost of open conflict here.

Yuli Kosharovsky has also been waiting. Informed that he has made the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the longest refusenik—seventeen years—Kosharovsky smiles with an irony whose finest subtleties he alone can appreciate. He speaks softly because he is in the eleventh day of a hunger strike and must conserve his energy. His little son brings him bottle after bottle of Borzhomi, a cloudy Georgian mineral water.

With his shock of gray-brown hair, his gray-brown goatee, and sharp eyes behind pince-nez-like glasses, Kosharovsky looks every inch the Russian intellectual, a strict violin teacher, a professor of chemistry. His stance is that of defiant optimism, that being, in his opinion, the most difficult and exhilarating challenge of all. But he is worried that the refuseniks have become a "forgotten people," an issue that the West found as disposable as a razor or cigarette lighter. For that reason, he has begun to contemplate steps even more extreme than a hunger strike. And Kosharovsky is also disturbed by the rise of anti-Semitism in the USSR, particularly by the fringe group known as the patriotic association, *Pamyat* ("Memory").

"Would you like to read some of their literature?" he says in a half whisper. Once again, the mysteries of distribution—the longest refusenik hands me a stack of pathologically anti-Semitic articles.

According to *Pamyat,* the Russians are tired of waiting too. It is the Russian people who have paid the heaviest cost in suffering; it is the Russian land that has been blighted with the worst pollution; it is Russian culture whose monuments have suffered the worst desecra-

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tion. Those who write for *Pamyat* seem perfectly sane when they discuss ecological problems or their success in preserving old churches, thereby winning the grudging respect of some intellectuals and the open admiration of others, like the "village" writer Valentin Rasputin.

They seem perfectly sane when they take an unequivocal stand in favor of open borders. It is only when they analyze the root cause of Russian suffering and ask, Who is the enemy? that they reveal their fundamental derangement. The cause of all Russia's woes, past and present, is an international conspiracy of Zionists and Masons. This is a point they prove by quoting Dostoevsky and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

Pamyat is discussed often and considered dangerous, not so much in and of itself but because, though extreme, it is not isolated. Its derangements are only magnifications of what the Russian psyche has undergone in its terrible twentieth century. It was too much. No one can understand how it all happened.

* * *

Some resort to fundamentalism; some return to the fundamentals.

A young couple lives in a communal apartment in Moscow, two rooms for them and their three children. The other tenants include a man who apparently works for the KGB, which is headquartered just a few blocks away, a simple old country woman, and another entire family living in a single room. There are four refrigerators in the kitchen, two stoves, two tables. People drift in and out of each other's meals.

The young couple's life is centered entirely on the family and the Russian Orthodox Church. Theirs is a Dostoevskian life of searching for God, ragged poverty, and passion. The husband, tall, bearded, sardonic, also has a passion for Russian crime. Out on the back staircase for a smoke, he shows me where a dangerous narcotic addict sometimes sleeps, on the landing in front of an internationally known artist's studio (who is, in fact, away at the moment, in Vienna). The first time the addict and the artist saw each other there, they looked into each other's eyes and came to a tacit agreement: Don't bother me and I won't bother you. Art, crime, and God-seeking all on one cracked and crumbling Moscow staircase, the "black way" as the Russians say.

He tells me that most crime is committed by narcotics addicts, and, with a mixture of sadness and shame, he reports that pickpocketing is rare—"It's an art, it requires talent, discipline, training." The typical crime is a break-in, but when the addicts are desperate, they put in emergency hospital calls and rob the ambulance of its drugs the minute it arrives.

The subject turns from crime to work and I ask why he thinks Russians work so poorly. "For us, work has always been . . ." he looks away in search of the right word, "a punishment."

We go back into the kitchen, where pots are boiling, children are crying, and the KGB man is replacing a container of yogurt in his refrigerator.

"Russians are masochists," sighs the wife, then adds with a defiantly gleaming smile: "Sadomasochists".

* * *

A story making the rounds. A man is applying for a job. The personnel manager says, "Before I couldn't say this to you. But now we have glasnost *and I can openly tell you that I'm not hiring you because you're a Jew."*

* * *

Glasnost is easy to find. It's the light-blue issue of *Novy Mir* that contains Joseph Brodsky's poems. (It is that very issue that is used to whack a Borzoi after the dog has grabbed meat from the table: "You want *glasnost* in your face!" shouts one woman and everyone laughs heartily.) But where, oh where is *perestroika*?

In search of it I go to the Sunday market that surrounds the Ryzhsky Metro station in front of which is a heroic statue of a young man holding up a satellite to the sky. Some of the market is enclosed but most of it takes place outdoors on a series of treacherously icy slopes except where the snow and ice have melted into leg-breaker puddles. The sounds of American rock are in the air: cassettes are a hot item, almost a means of exchange. There isn't much

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buying going on; the Russians are just practicing shopping, a remedial course in the market. The whole country is trying to learn to do business, be businesslike. The operative word now is *samookupaemost*, meaning the ability to cover expenses with revenues. To put it in plain English, the USSR is trying to learn how to at least break even.

Suddenly I come across a line of a dozen Russian grandmothers, country women, most of them hefty, all of them bundled up and looking incredibly sad. Each one holds a dress or lace work for sale. Human hangers, a one-person, one-item store. They seem embarrassed, even shamed by what they are doing. They are doing it because it is the order of the day and everyone should pitch in, and also of course because a few sorely needed rubles can be made.

Is Gorbachev trying to save the Soviet economy with rummage sales? Or is this the school of the marketplace, a kindergarten of commerce? As one Russian remarked with a combination of utter seriousness and utter sarcasm: "But look, it's tremendous progress! We've gone from a Pharonic society to the Middle Ages all in one leap!"

* * *

He swears he dreamed it, but when I tell it to other people they say it's a well-known story. Was he lying? Deluded? Or did the story in fact originate in his dream and then spread as a joke? That's possible in Russia, where, as Berdayev said, consciousness and unconsciousness have a different relationship than they do in the West.

He says: "I dreamed I was going somewhere and had to fill out an endless form. Grandmother's favorite reading, year of her birth, social background, where buried, cause of death, on and on. Finally, after hours and hours, I get to the last question: In what activities did you engage during the period of so-called *perestroika*?"

That is the fear, but in the early spring of 1988, the balance was tipped toward hopeful expectation. The hope was that the Soviet Union was in the process of becoming a relatively normal society, one with the normal unhappiness of life for which Nadezhda Mandelstam yearned during the madness of the 1930s.

The USSR today is a crisis on the move. Vast, mighty, unwieldy, Soviet society has gone hurtling from the stability of stagnation into the unknown. But can the contradictions between political power and economic growth, empire and democracy, be resolved? The writing is probably already on the wall, but no one can read it, any more than I could read the last Hebrew letters on that courtyard wall in Vilnius. □

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Nicolaus Mills

HEARD AND UNHEARD SPEECHES

What Really Happened at the March on Washington?

It was not the speech Martin Luther King planned to give. He wanted his contribution to the March on Washington to be brief, "sort of a *Gettysburg Address*." He would, he knew, be following a long list of speakers. A fiery sermon would not do. Not for this audience. The aim of the march was to pressure Congress into passing President Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill. Demonstration, not civil disobedience, the march sponsors had agreed, would be the order of the day. It was crucial to make sure the crowd that had come to Washington stayed calm and did nothing to offend the congressmen on whom final passage of civil rights legislation depended. In an earlier meeting with the leaders of the march, the president himself had warned against "the wrong kind of demonstration at the wrong time."

Once King took the microphone and looked out at the two hundred thousand people gathered around the Reflecting Pool of the Lincoln Memorial, he knew, however, that neither he nor any of the march sponsors had imagined a gathering on this scale. Downtown Washington was deserted, but everywhere King looked there were people. They were even perched in the trees that bordered the Reflecting Pool. The marchers had begun assembling at the Washington Monument in early dawn. By 10:30 there were fifty thousand, and by noon the number had doubled. Opening the program, A. Philip Randolph, the seventy-four-year-old director of the march, announced, "We are gathered here in the largest demonstration in the history of this nation." King, too, was awed. As he waited for the applause that greeted him to die down, his movements were stiff, almost jerky. He started out reading his prepared speech, and only after he had gotten through most of it did he begin to speak extemporaneously.

It was a decision that made all the difference in the world. Until his "I have a dream" peroration, there was little in King's speech that moved his audience. He had tried too hard to write an updated *Gettysburg Address*. What emerged from his prepared text was not moral passion but historical self-consciousness. It was a speech so dominated by carefully worked out metaphors that it left little room for spontaneity. In Lincolnesque fashion King began, "Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation." Next came an even more elaborate historical reference—to the promissory note the Founding Fathers signed when they wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. "It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as citizens of color are concerned," King declared. "Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds.' "

"But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt," King continued. "*Now* is the time to make real the promises of democracy. *Now* is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice." Then, after a litany of all that was wrong with black life in America, King moved on to another appeal for action. "We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and the Negro

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in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote," he insisted.

Once King began to speak of his dream, however, what he had to say became an altogether different story. "I'd used it many times before, that thing about 'I have a dream,'" King would modestly acknowledge. But in the context of the March on Washington, there was nothing "used" about King's peroration. It transformed his words so that his speech no longer had a clear-cut beginning, middle, and end. It became a dialogue between him and the crowd. King offered a dream. The crowd answered back with applause. King responded with a new dream. It was no longer just civil rights that King was talking about now. It was civil religion—the nation's destiny as the carrying out of God's will. As King began to speak about his dream, God's purposes, American history, and the fate of the nation's black population became inseparable. His "I have a dream" image was the Bible made political, the southern revivalist tradition linked to the idea of equality.

King would cite the Declaration of Independence, then picture the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners sitting down together at the table of brotherhood. He would quote Isaiah—"Every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain shall be made low"—and imagine freedom ringing from "every hill and molehill of Mississippi." He would call for the day when "all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, 'My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty,'" and he would end by envisioning a future in which the entire nation would "join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last. Free at last. Thank God, Almighty, we are free at last.'"

King's vision took the country from its beginnings to the present, and as he repeated his "I have a dream" litany (four times in the first paragraph in which he used it, eight times in all), the momentum of what he was saying began to build. Each dream stood on its own, yet melted into the others. And as the process repeated itself, the hope King was expressing became more tenable.

In the next day's *New York Times*, columnist James Reston summed up King's speech by comparing his words to those of Roger Williams, Sam Adams, Henry Thoreau, William Lloyd Garrison, and Eugene Debs. "Each time the dream was a promise out of our ancient articles of faith: phrases from the Constitution, lines from the great anthem of the nation, guarantees from the Bill of Rights, all ending with the vision that they might one day all come true," Reston wrote. It was the kind of front-page analysis political speeches rarely receive in this country, but King had created a context in which Reston's praise did not seem extravagant. By the time King finished, there wasn't a base he had failed to touch. Built on repetition, his speech grew stronger as it was replayed on television in homes across the country. One did not have to be in the crowd at the Lincoln Memorial to identify with the hope it expressed.

King's success at the March on Washington was especially crucial for the civil rights movement. Plans for the march had been in the works since 1962, when A. Philip Randolph, the founder and president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, proposed a "mass descent" on Washington that would draw public attention to the economic plight of blacks in America and the need for more civil rights legislation. But by early 1963 it seemed unlikely that there would be a march. Randolph could not get other civil rights leaders to agree that the time was right. Only in June, when Martin Luther King concluded that the civil rights demonstrations he had been conducting in Birmingham against Public Safety Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor and the city's merchants needed to be followed by protests on a national level, did prospects for holding the march revive. Even then, the civil rights leadership was divided over how the march should be conducted and who should foot the bill for it. The problem of paying for the march was removed when Stephen Currier, president of the liberal Taconic Foundation, proposed the establishment of the Council for United Civil Rights Leadership (CUCRL), which would serve as a clearinghouse for dividing the larger contributions that Currier himself promised to solicit on behalf of the march.

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But not until June 24 was the date for the march set, and even at that point infighting continued. The NAACP's Roy Wilkins objected to Bayard Rustin, who had spent time in prison for refusing to serve in the army and had an arrest record for homosexuality, being named director of the march (Rustin was instead given the title of deputy director). The leadership of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was unhappy with the decision of the march sponsors to forbid civil disobedience.

King's speech did not make such internal differences vanish, but it did deflect public attention from what divided the march's black leaders, who, in addition to Randolph and King, included Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, John Lewis of SNCC, James Farmer of CORE, and Whitney M. Young, Jr. of the National Urban League. King's vision of a civil rights movement rooted in a belief in American justice forced the public and the media to think about the reasons for the march. After King finished speaking, it was easy for Bayard Rustin to step to the podium and get the crowd to roar its approval of the goals of the march. The nation was put in the same position. In the face of King's dream, it seemed petty to dwell on any divisions among the march's six black sponsors.

King's speech also furthered the kind of biracial coalition the established civil rights movement believed was needed in order to get Congress to act. In addition to the black sponsors of the march, there were four key white sponsors: Walter Reuther, president of the United Automobile Workers; Matthew Ahmann, director of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice; Rabbi Joachim Prinz, president of the American Jewish Congress; and the Reverend Eugene Carson Blake, the chief executive officer of the United Presbyterian Church. King's speech not only said they were welcome; it said that in a country where racial justice was both a religious and secular concern the kinds of organizations these men belonged to had an obligation to participate in the civil rights movement.

Finally, King's triumph at the march on Washington was crucial for the Kennedy administration. The relationship between King and Kennedy had become extremely complicated by 1963. During the 1960 presidential campaign Kennedy had publicly intervened to have King released from a Georgia jail, and in 1963, when King was in jail in Alabama, Kennedy had acted again, this time calling Coretta King to assure her the FBI had ascertained that her husband was safe. The calls earned Kennedy the gratitude of the King family as well as a great many black votes. But the calls did not make King look the other way when the Kennedy administration sought to keep "order" in the South rather than support black protest. In early June, King made headlines when he described the president's record on civil rights as "inadequate" and charged him with not living up to his campaign promises.

Only reluctantly did the president commit himself to supporting the March on Washington. It was not until June 22, after plans to hold a march sometime in August were announced, that the president asked the leaders of the march to the White House. At that meeting he did everything in his power, short of asking them to call off the march, to discourage them from going ahead with it. "It seemed to me a great mistake to announce a march on Washington before the [Civil Rights] bill was even in committee," the president told the march leaders. "Now we are in a new phase, the legislative phase, and results are essential. . . . we have, first, to oppose demonstrations which will lead to violence, and, second, give Congress a fair chance to work its will." Three weeks then went by before the president gave his formal blessing to the march, and in doing so, he made sure that the press understood that in his mind it was "not a march on the capital" but "a peaceful assembly calling for a redress of grievances."

The president was gambling. By coming out ahead of time in favor of the march, he wanted to make sure that its target was the southern senators opposing his Civil Rights Bill rather than his own record on civil rights. The national reaction to King's "I have a dream" speech redeemed that strategy. The optimism

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of King's speech, its equation of civil rights and Americanism, was tailor-made to the kind of political image the Kennedy administration wanted to project. The order maintained by the marchers added to that image. At the end of the day, the president no longer had to worry that he had made a mistake in supporting the march. He could share in the march's triumph by inviting its leaders to the White House and announcing, "This nation can properly be proud of the demonstration that has occurred here today. The leaders of the organizations sponsoring the march and all who have participated in it deserve our appreciation for the detailed preparations that made it possible and for the orderly manner in which it has been conducted."

Skepticism from Blacks

As he listened to the speeches and watched the marchers (three-fourths of whom, a Bureau of Social Science Research survey would reveal, held white-collar jobs) Malcolm X, then at the height of his influence as a black nationalist, was horrified. The organization that so impressed reporters—eighty thousand premade lunches, one thousand five hundred volunteer marshals, printed picket signs—struck Malcolm as proof of how thoroughly the march leaders had caved in to white demands. "Who ever heard of angry revolutionaries swinging their bare feet together with their oppressor in lily pad pools, with gospels and guitars and 'I have a dream' speeches?" Malcolm would write in his *Autobiography*. "There wasn't a single logistics aspect uncontrolled. The marchers had been instructed to bring no signs—signs were provided. They had been told to sing one song: 'We Shall Overcome.' They had been told *how* to arrive, *when, where* to arrive, where to assemble, when to *start* marching, the *route* to march."

Malcolm X was not the only black leader with doubts about the march. For very different reasons, John Lewis, the new chairman of SNCC, also had doubts. At twenty-five, the youngest of the march sponsors, Lewis was initially ignored by most of the press and the other march leaders. The Sunday before the march, the *New York Times Magazine* carried a symposium on what black leaders wanted, but neither Lewis nor SNCC was asked to participate, and when the time came to divide the money that had been raised for the civil rights organizations sponsoring the march, SNCC found itself shortchanged. While the NAACP and Urban League received $125,000 each and King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) $50,000, SNCC, whose field secretaries in Mississippi were risking their lives daily, got only $15,000.

What was most troubling to Lewis about the march was not, however, its logistics or the financial treatment of SNCC. What bothered Lewis most were the compromises the march sponsors were prepared to make in order to maintain unity and gain the support of the Kennedy administration. The constituency that John Lewis spoke for was, as far as he was concerned, already on the front lines in the South. In addressing the March on Washington, Lewis saw his task as one of shattering illusions and setting the record straight. It was all that was missing from the March on Washington that preoccupied Lewis. "We march today for jobs and freedom, but we have nothing to be proud of," Lewis declared in his opening sentences. "For hundreds and thousands of our brothers are not here. They have no money for their transportation, for they are receiving starvation wages or no wages at all. While we stand here, there are sharecroppers in the Delta of Mississippi who are out in the fields working for less than three dollars a day for twelve hours of work."

Few at the march and still fewer watching on television were prepared for Lewis's anger. But as he warmed up and got further into his speech, Lewis made no attempt to close the distance he had staked out in his opening paragraph. In contrast to King, who would wait for applause before going on to a new idea, Lewis moved at his own pace, barely pausing to catch his breath between paragraphs. The Kennedy administration and the moderate tone of the march were his next targets. "It is true that we support the present civil rights bill in Congress. We support it with great reservations, however. Unless Title Three is put in this bill, there is nothing to protect young children and old women from police dogs and fire hoses, their penalty for engaging in peaceful demonstrations," Lewis declared. "As it stands now the voting section of this bill will not help

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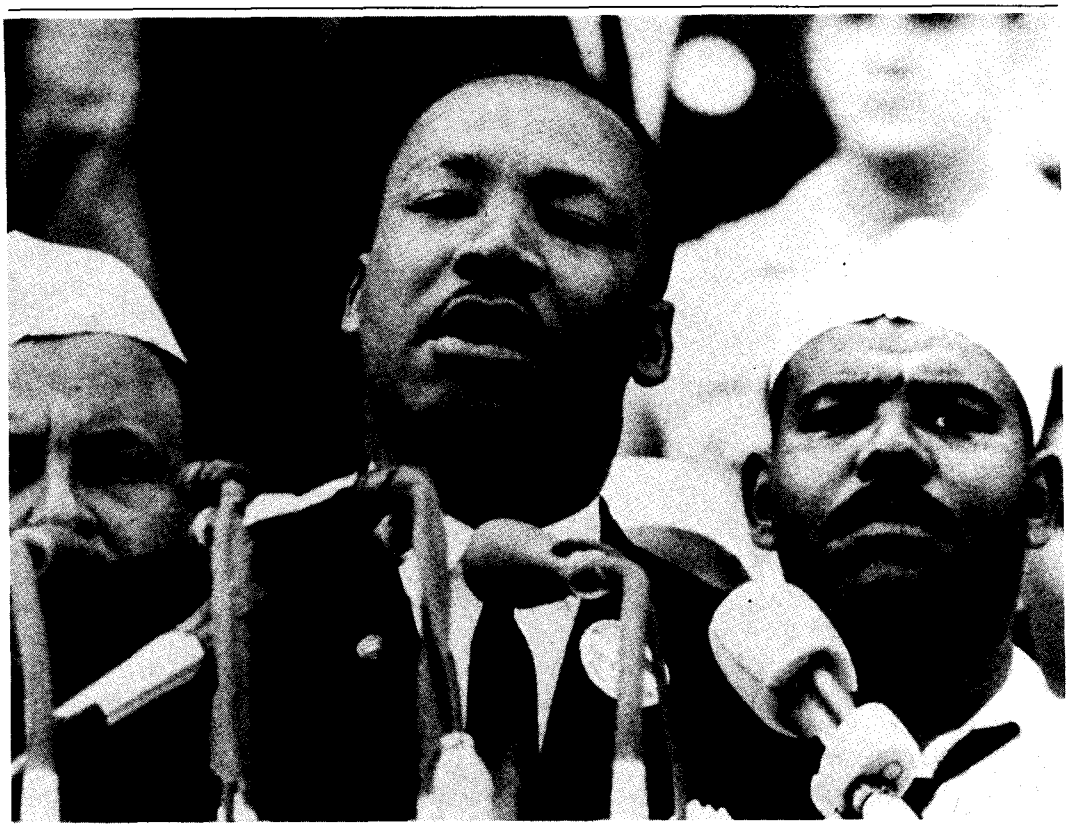

The wire services reported that King called the march the "greatest demonstration of freedom in the history of our nation." (UPI)

thousands of black people who want to vote." Blacks in America are at the end of their patience, Lewis warned. It was now up to the federal government to intervene on their behalf or face the consequences. "To those who have said be patient and wait, we must say that we cannot be patient, we do not want to be free gradually. We want our freedom and we want it now," Lewis insisted. Then in a far more militant reference to the Founding Fathers than King's gentle one, Lewis went on to conclude, "All of us must get in this great social revolution sweeping our nation. Get in and stay in the streets of every city, every village, and every hamlet of this nation until true freedom comes, until the unfinished revolution of 1776 is complete."

Lewis's most powerful criticisms were not, however, voiced in the speech he gave at the Lincoln Memorial but in the speech he intended to deliver but was forced to change. An advance copy of the speech had been read by Attorney General Robert Kennedy and his assistant for civil rights, Burke Marshall. They then passed on the speech to Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle, the Catholic prelate scheduled to give the march invocation. O'Boyle's negative reaction to the speech was the same as Kennedy's, and he threatened to withdraw from the march unless Lewis's militant language was changed. When news of Cardinal O'Boyle's objections reached Bayard Rustin on Tuesday, he called a meeting of the march sponsors and that night met with Lewis in an effort to get him to change his text. Lewis refused, and early Wednesday morning, with the start of the march just hours away, the dispute continued. O'Boyle's objections put Rustin in a difficult position. The specific deletions that the cardinal wanted, as David Garrow notes in *Bearing the Cross*, had been

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drafted by Tom Kahn, Rustin's aide. But to lose O'Boyle's support at this juncture would be to lose the kind of unity the march was designed to achieve. O'Boyle warned that, if the changes in Lewis's speech were not made, he and the other religious leaders would leave the march. Finally, with the march program only minutes away, Lewis agreed to change his speech. In a small room just behind the statue of Lincoln, Lewis and SNCC staffers James Forman and Courtland Cox worked out a new speech designed to meet the cardinal's demands.

Lewis's decision to change his speech did not, however, persuade him that his original draft had been a mistake. The militancy of what he had planned to say had not been imposed on him by Tom Kahn. Lewis was among the SNCC leaders who wanted demonstrations at the Justice Department to be included in the march plans, and he believed then, as he would observe twenty-five years later, "The speech was very much in keeping with American ideals." Nothing in the original speech would have been a surprise to anyone who knew the commitment Lewis had made to the civil rights movement, beginning with the Nashville sit-ins of 1960. But there was an unmistakable difference in Lewis's two speeches. At the March on Washington Lewis was struggling not only to keep a lid on his emotions but to express himself in language that fell short of what he wanted to say.

It was a different story with the uncensored speech. There Lewis spoke for a SNCC that was skeptical of the Kennedys and believed, as James Forman would later write, that the administration wanted the march "to take the steam out of the black anger then rising in the South." At the march Lewis had softened his doubts about the president's Civil Rights Bill, first announcing that SNCC supported the bill, then announcing that it had reservations. In his original speech, on the other hand, Lewis felt no need for such qualification. "In good conscience we cannot support, wholeheartedly, the administration's civil rights bill, for it is too little, and too late," he declared. "There is not one thing in the bill that will protect our people from police brutality."

By the end of the 1960s, it would be de rigueur for any black leader who wanted to be seen as militant to attack liberal civil rights legislation, but there was nothing contrived about the anger in Lewis's undelivered speech. His was not the kind of put-on protest that Tom Wolfe would later characterize as "mau-mauing" the white man. In style and substance the passages that so upset Cardinal O'Boyle matched Lewis's politics. It was General Sherman in Georgia, not Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," rather than soothing black spirituals, that Lewis wanted his Washington audience to go away thinking about. As his original text made clear in the bluntest possible language, Lewis believed that the real problem for blacks in the South was not southern politicians so much as the American political system itself. "This nation is still a place of cheap political leaders who build their careers on immoral compromises and ally themselves with open forms of political, economic, and social exploitation. What political leader here can stand up and say, 'My party is the party of principles'?" Lewis asked. The party of Kennedy, he pointed out, was also the party of Mississippi Senator James Eastland. Although the two men seemed like opposites, their conduct was often similar. The president, Lewis argued, had not merely proposed an inadequate civil rights bill, he was doing his best to slow the pace of black protest. "Mr. Kennedy is trying to take the revolution out of the street and put it into the courts," Lewis charged. "I want to know, which side is the Federal Government on?"

There was, however, no turning back the forces that the civil rights revolution had unleashed, Lewis insisted, and in the conclusion of his speech, the part that most offended Cardinal O'Boyle, Lewis predicted what blacks would and should do: "Listen Mr. Kennedy, listen Mr. Congressman, listen fellow citizens, the black masses are on the march for jobs and freedom, and we must say to the politicians that there won't be a 'cooling-off' period." In his final paragraph Lewis assumed the voice of a modern Jeremiah, predicting that the civil rights revolution of the 1960s would conquer

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the South much as the Civil War had. By comparison with King's language, Lewis's language here was spare, a march tune rather than a hymn. But Lewis, too, could use metaphor and there was no mistaking the threat in his deliberately repetitive syntax ("We will"/"We shall" each key sentence began). "The time will come when we will not confine our marching to Washington," Lewis proclaimed. "We will march through the South, through the heart of Dixie, the way Sherman did. We shall pursue our own 'scorched earth' policy and burn Jim Crow to the ground—non-violently. We shall fragment the South into a thousand pieces and put them back together in the image of democracy. We will make the action of the past few months look petty."

John Lewis would later insist that the militant role he played at the March on Washington worked to SNCC's benefit. In his year-end report to SNCC, Lewis would look back on the march and observe, "Since that time I find that people are asking questions about SNCC. What is SNCC's program? What is SNCC doing? Who is SNCC? And usually when they do find out, they want in some way or another to become identified with SNCC. For this we can thank our good brethren Archbishop O'Boyle, Messrs. Wilkins, King, Young, and Randolph." In 1963, Lewis's view was shared by few outside SNCC. In less than a year, it would be clear, however, that, although the drama of the March on Washington belonged to Martin Luther King, its prophetic voice belonged to John Lewis.

In signalling SNCC's break with the conventional liberalism of the early 1960s, Lewis had forecast both the strategy and the tone of the next stage of civil rights activity in the South. The compromises the March on Washington's black sponsors had made in order to win over the media and the Kennedy administration would no longer be the way of the future. A new era was at hand, one in which blacks like Lewis would continue to work with whites, but now in coalitions they determined, not on the liberal assumption of "We're all in this together."

By the following June there would be a new cutting edge to the civil rights movement. It would not be supplied by the lawyers of the NAACP or the ministers of SCLC but by a generation of young SNCC field secretaries, most of them in their twenties, most of them unknown to the public. For the next two years, until Lewis was replaced by Stokely Carmichael as SNCC chairman, they would lead the civil rights movement through its most productive period. The result would be the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and, most dramatic of all, the Mississippi Summer Project, in which a SNCC-led volunteer army, composed primarily of northern college students, would show that even the most racially feared state in the Deep South could be challenged. □

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Michael Walzer

SOCIALIZING THE WELFARE STATE

Democracy in the Distributive Sector

I suggest that we think of the modern welfare state as a system of nationalized distribution. Certain key social goods have been taken out of private control or out of exclusive private control and are now provided by law to all (or to some subset of) citizens and residents. The distribution is paid for with public funds and organized by public officials. Social Security is an easy example. In the past, the private sector sold old-age insurance and pensions to men and women who could afford the premiums. Now the state takes over, collects the premiums in the form of a tax, and guarantees the pensions. Similarly the British national health service: without abolishing the private sector, the state organizes and largely controls the distribution of health care, guaranteeing some minimal standard of care to everyone.

Nationalization is not a new process. The state as we know it has its origins in the nationalization of police protection and military security, both of which the feudal regime distributed privately. More recent nationalizations have come at the expense of capitalist or market distributions—without, however, supplanting either capitalism or the market. The process is infinitely variable, for even if there is only a finite number of goods whose distribution might conceivably be nationalized, there is no limit to the ways in which nationalized distributions might be organized or to the range of people for whom the provision of this or that good might be guaranteed. Most nationalizations are only partial in character, state distribution co-existing with other forms of distributive activity—as public education, though it is guaranteed to all, co-exists with private. The National Endowment for the Humanities is a typical, if minor, agency of the welfare state, distributing funds that are only supplementary to other distributions, some philanthropic in character, some market based. Nevertheless, we can say that the support of the humanities is now a national project.

The development and expansion of such projects has gone much further in some countries than in others, but it would be a mistake to arrange countries along a single continuum, as if nationalization had some necessary form or logical endpoint. It doesn't; every welfare state has its own history and, I suppose, its own destiny. But nationalization does produce, under contemporary conditions, a characteristic set of distributive arrangements: a central administration, a new cadre of civil servants, a more or less uniform code of rules and regulations. However partial the arrangements are, insofar as they are state arrangements, they will be organized and controlled along what we might think of as Weberian lines, in accordance with some "rational/legal" ideal. The welfare state is first of all a state. The recipients of welfare stand in a necessary relationship to the state, a relationship mediated by the state bureaucracy.

Described in this way, the nationalization of distribution invites comparison with the nationalization of production. My argument in this article is essentially contained in that comparison; it is an argument that works by analogy. The problems of the welfare state, I want to

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suggest, have been anticipated, have already been the subject of critical reflection, in the socialist debate over "nationalization," even though productive rather than distributive activities were at issue, and still are at issue, in that debate.

The two nationalizations are formally parallel. Both involve state takeovers of activities that were once entirely in private hands. Production, like distribution, can be made into a national project, managed by public officials, with investment capital provided, if necessary, out of tax money. Neither of these projects has a necessary form or preordained endpoint. Just as it is possible to take over the distribution of this social good but not that one, so it is possible to take over this industry and leave that one untouched—steel but not chemicals, chemicals but not steel.

And as with any given good, so with any given industry, nationalization is commonly incomplete, no bar to small-scale (sometimes not even to large-scale) entrepreneurial activity on the side—in education or health, say, or in chemicals or steel. But whatever the extent and degree of nationalization, its characteristic features regularly reappear: centralized control, bureaucracy, uniform regulation.

If nationalized distribution makes for the welfare state, nationalized production makes, or was once thought to make, for the socialist state. Theorists of socialism have had little to say about distribution. Get the productive arrangements right, they thought, and distributive arrangements would fall readily into place. Thus Marx: "Any distribution whatever of the means of consumption is only a consequence of the . . . mode of production itself." Curiously, though socialists in office have been far more successful when they nationalized distribution than when they nationalized production, theory has never caught up with political reality. Production is still primary in principle, and the argument over the merits of nationalization is still focused on productive activity.

Another reason for the focus, of course, is the very lack of success in bringing on socialism by taking over industry. Nationalized production has been a great disappointment. I'll try to explain the nature of that disappointment and then turn to the analogous but smaller disappointments of nationalized distribution.

It is not inefficiency that has made nationalized production disappointing. State-run industries are not (in the West) noticeably less efficient than privately run industries. Indeed, the problems of the two, and their performance in the face of those problems, have not been all that different. British steel and American steel, for example, have undergone a similar decline for similar reasons. It may even be the case that lack of managerial adventurousness is one of the reasons *in both cases*: why should corporate managers and state managers, recruited from the same social groups, subject to virtually identical incentives and constraints, behave differently?

The possibilities for entrepreneurial initiative are no doubt greater in the private sector, but even there they exist on the margins, not at the center, not in heavy industry, not in the great corporate complex. The prospects for social responsibility and long-term planning are no doubt better in state-run industry, but it has proven possible to impose responsibility and to generate plans, where there is a will to do so, without nationalization. At the center, in the modern regulative state, nationalized production isn't significantly different from private production—and there, of course, lies the disappointment.

Nor is the experience of workers in state-run factories all that different, and, since nationalization was supposedly undertaken on behalf of the workers, that is the greatest disappointment. What difference does it make if one's boss is a civil servant rather than a corporate official? In principle, perhaps, a great difference, since workers are also voters and so can take part in choosing the boss of their boss. But the political distance is too great: what is true in principle is insignificant in practice. The effective chain of command, the everyday experience of hierarchy, is not much changed by the fact of periodic national elections. The relations of production have not been transformed. To work on the assembly line of a nationalized industry is no more exciting or

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desirable than to work on the assembly line of a privately run industry. When the worker calculates costs and benefits, nationalization hardly comes into the reckoning.

Hence the standard left-wing critique of nationalized production goes like this: What we really had in mind was *socialized* production. The real alternative to private management is self-management, *autogestion*, workers' control, some contemporary version of syndicalism—for the standard critique recapitulates much of what syndicalists, guild socialists, and other pluralist critics of the state were arguing many decades ago. If the experience of production is to be changed, it is not enough for the nation or the state to take over the process; the producers themselves must take over. The tasks of management must be shared, or the managers must be controlled, by the men and women on the line. Otherwise it is only state power, not the power of ordinary people, that is enhanced.

I won't pursue this argument any further; I only want to point to the reference of my analogy. This critique of nationalized production is relevant also to the case of nationalized distribution. The disappointment, of course, is not the same; the state's distribution of social goods actually delivers the goods—to far more people than private distributors ever reached, and with far greater steadiness and consistency. And to some extent, the experience of welfare recipients has indeed been transformed: now they get what they get, not in the form of charity and *noblesse oblige* but in the form of legal entitlement, not as paupers but as citizens.

But the transformation is only partial, for it is also true that old patterns of dependency have been reconstituted as new patterns of civil clientage. Private distributors have been replaced (and, no doubt, improved upon) by state officials, but what might be called the welfare relationship has not disappeared. The position of employed workers, even relatively ill-paid workers, has been strengthened and stabilized. But the poorest citizens, the unemployed and the helpless, are not significantly more independent, more responsible, more capable of shaping their own lives and joining in the common work of citizenship. And that is the disappointment: the purpose of nationalized distribution was to free us from all the superfluous and degrading forms of human dependency. Now we measure the advance of the welfare state—but we can hardly measure its success—by the growing number of dependents each working citizen must support; and to many citizens these days the number seems insupportable.

The disappointment has another (related?) form. Nationalized distribution was supposed to express a sense of the nation/state as a community committed to its citizens—or, better, as a community constituted by citizens committed to one another. The welfare state was imagined as a systematic form of mutual assistance, replacing the unsystematic (and unreliable) forms that had existed before. Certain historical images lie behind this conception, images interestingly contrasted with those that lie behind the idea of socialism. Socialists seek to institutionalize and perpetuate the ardor of revolutionary engagement, the solidarity of the strike meeting or the political demonstration. Their heroes are not so much workers working as workers *deciding* (together) on how to work. A nationalized factory run by bureaucrats isn't the right setting at all.

Defenders of the welfare state by contrast seek to institutionalize and perpetuate the helpfulness born out of collective crisis, the spirit of mutuality that arises among citizens confronting a flood or a storm or even an enemy attack. British welfarism, it has been said, grew out of the ashes of the blitz. Its heroes are not almsgivers dropping coins in a hat, but men and women extending a helping hand to one another. A check in the mail, though that is very important, doesn't quite make the proper point.

Let me now complete the analogy: what we really had in mind was *socialized* distribution. The preferred successor to private philanthropy is collective help—which is the work not only of bureaucrats spending taxpayers' money but also of citizens "spending" their own time and energy. It isn't easy, however, to say exactly what this would involve. What would a socialized welfare state look like? We might

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think about it in terms of "power to the distributors," on analogy with the old socialist slogan "power to the producers." But the distributors are mostly state officials and professionals of different sorts, and they already exercise considerable power over their clients, the men and women who receive the benefits they distribute. Then what about "power to the recipients?" But wouldn't that make a virtue out of dependency? And what will the recipients, suddenly empowered, ask for but more of what they are already getting?

Neither distributors nor recipients, as these two groups are currently constituted, seem plausible candidates for empowerment. But both groups could conceivably be reconstituted on a broader basis. That would open the way to a twofold program, which I shall explain and defend in the rest of this paper: first, power to the distributors only insofar as many more people, amateurs as well as professionals, join in the work of distribution; and second, power to recipients and potential recipients, that is, ordinary citizens at or near the point of reception.

Power to the Distributors

Socializing distribution, like socializing production, requires us to find ways in which the strengths of civil society can be reflected in, and enhanced rather than overwhelmed by, the growing activism of the state. It does not require the disappearance or the replacement of the state—a utopian project and one unlikely in fact to strengthen civil society. Society's "civilians" need the state (and the bureaucracy) to defend them against their own divisiveness, to protect them when they are alone and helpless, to enforce universal standards of care and safety. But every state preys on the society it protects; that's why socialization is the necessary correlative of nationalization. The problem is to hold the two in some rough balance: central planning and workers' control, state regulation and entrepreneurial initiative, a welfare minimum and local self-help.

We can see some of the problems involved in holding the balance if we consider for a moment the organization and politics of American education—the first distributive sector to be both nationalized and socialized. Education is nationalized in that it is guaranteed by the state and its delivery regulated, at least in some ultimate sense, by federal authorities. And it is socialized in that it is organized and run on a day-to-day basis by local and elected school committees. The tension generated over racial integration in the public schools—a policy imposed by federal judges and resisted by local committees—is a tension between nationalization and socialization.

This has a characteristic content, which I will come to in a moment. I want to note now its characteristic political form: the conflict arises between state officials, judicial or bureaucratic appointees, who are professionally committed to national goals, and elected representatives who are more parochially committed to their own constituents.

One can imagine similar tensions in the field of production between, say, state planners and factory councils. But tensions of this latter sort, in this country, at least, are only imaginary, while in the field of distribution they are real and even urgent. Is it odd or is it usual (a feature, perhaps, of left-wing thought?) that the general issue is debated with reference chiefly to the imaginary case?

The substance of the debate is readily described: it is the claims of efficiency and universality that are most often represented by national (state/bureaucratic) authority. Consider an easy example from the distribution of medical care. State officials are likely to want to impose a division of labor, concentrating expensive equipment at a small number of centrally located hospitals whose services are readily available across a wide area, asking smaller hospitals to focus on preventive or routine care. The division makes a lot of sense, and yet a local hospital committee, serving a particular community, elected by the members of that community, might nonetheless seek to obtain the very latest medical technology for its own "people"—setting an example of welfare autarky likely enough to be imitated.

The claims of particularity are represented by social authority, that is by men and women

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closely connected to a particular place or regularly attentive to the interests and aspirations of a particular group. Because of this, socialized distribution is bound to be different in different places, reflecting the decisions of many different committees. And "different" here necessarily means unequal: some committees will function better than others, taxing their members more heavily, spending their money more wisely, choosing to provide these services rather than those. Just as factory councils would be more, or less, successful, so school committees and hospital boards are in fact more, or less, successful. When welfare is delivered socially rather than nationally, citizens receive different and unequal kinds or amounts of welfare. State bureaucrats, acting in the name of efficiency and universality, will seek (as they should) to remedy the inequalities, providing equal financial support, for example, to every school district. But they can't require, without abolishing the local committees, that the money be spent equally well.

Difference and inequality are intensified by the partial character of distributive nationalization. All sorts of voluntary organizations participate in the delivery of welfare goods and services, and it is obvious that these groups function differently in different communities, depending on the resources (time and energy as well as money) that they can command and on the skill of their leaders. Also on the policy commitments of their leaders: though these people are more often co-opted than elected, they are likely to reflect local opinion (subject, very often, to middle- or upper-class qualification).

All this belongs to the social sector, even though it has never in any formal sense been socialized, that is, handed over to, or taken over by, the local citizenry. It represents instead the voluntary mobilization of (some of) the citizens. We might think of voluntary mobilization as the spontaneous or nonpolitical form of socialization: it enables (some of) the citizens to control and shape the delivery of welfare services. And, of course, they control and shape it differently in accordance with their different views, and would do so even if the expenditure of tax money and bureaucratic effort were absolutely uniform across the nation.

One of the consequences of distributive nationalization in Western Europe has been a reduction of the extent and scope of voluntary activity. The clearest example is the collapse of the old working-class "friendly societies" that provided their members with the earliest form of social security. These groups have simply been superseded by the state, which provides for its members, that is, for everyone, a more secure security. Other forms of mutual aid have only been curtailed as activists realized that the work they once did is more efficiently, if not always more humanely, done by state officials.

I don't think that this curtailment has anywhere been an intended consequence of nationalization, though advocates of the welfare state have certainly intended a degree of consistency and uniformity in the provision of basic services that voluntary organizations cannot approach. They have also intended to professionalize these services, for the sake of consistency and uniformity, and to deliver them more impersonally, as entitlements rather than as gifts. All this is likely to make voluntary activity seem superfluous, if not positively wrongheaded. It certainly discourages volunteers, and a number of the more advanced welfare states have in fact reported a significant drop in voluntary contributions of time, energy, and money.

So the nationalization of distribution desocializes welfare—conceivably for good reasons. This effect is hardly visible in the United States, where nationalization is less advanced than in Europe and where voluntary activity is more highly valued. The value may, of course, help to account for the backwardness. In any case, the first represents a strength, the second a weakness in American welfarism, and the two together suggest the ambiguity of nationalization.

It was certainly not the intention of advocates of the welfare state to undercut or diminish altruistic feeling. On the contrary, they would say, the purpose of state action is only to guarantee a minimum, above which altruism would have free play. It appears,

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however, that if mutual assistance doesn't come into play at the minimal level, with regard to basic services, it won't come into play at all. So we need to think of ways to draw volunteers into the range of activities financed and superintended by the state; we need, as two British leftists have recently argued, a "more participative and decentralized form of service provision"—opening up room for self-help and local initiative.[1] Spontaneous socialization needs to be seconded by state-sponsored socialization, that is, the democratic transformation of state agencies at the local level or the transfer of authority and resources to voluntary organizations.

This will certainly make for new inequalities, since some agencies and organizations will be bolder or more energetic than others. But the alternative is to make our peace with the disappointments of nationalization, gratefully to accept the benefits that bureaucrats bring and give up the hope of providing some of those benefits more directly, as part of the everyday activity of (some) citizens. The result would be a welfare state unbalanced by what we might think of as a welfare society.

Power to the Recipients

But what (again) would a welfare society look like? The socialization process has two aspects. The first, much discussed in the 1960s, involves expanding participation in decision making; the second involves expanding participation in the actual delivery of welfare services.

I am inclined to think that the second is the more basic. It has no analogy in the field of production, where there already exists a mass of producers, and where socialization requires only that we find ways of introducing members of the mass into the business of management—members who already know something about what is being managed. The case is different in distribution, where the first requirement of a welfare society is to increase the number of people, recipients and potential recipients, who are also distributors. Only when that number is increased will it be possible to give recipients and distributors together a greater say in welfare management.

There is, of course, an alternative model, drawn more strictly on the productive analogy: a kind of welfare trade unionism, where recipients would be organized against distributors. But the analogy fails, I think, because welfare dependency is not a "trade." Recipients are not involved in an activity over which they can claim some rights of control. They have rights as citizens, of course, and they can organize interest or pressure groups to defend those rights; sometimes that defense will have to be militant if the rights are to be enjoyed at all. But the appeal of the recipients is to other citizens; we would not want them bargaining collectively with state bureaucrats over the size and delivery of their benefits.

On the other hand, there are a variety of decisions that might plausibly be made by local councils of citizens or groups of volunteers who know something about the distribution of benefits because they are involved in it, and who are at the same time actual or potential recipients.

The involvement might be worked out, that is, either within a democratized system of state provision or through the less systematic activities of philanthropic organizations. Indeed, it would probably be a feature of any welfare state that was also a welfare society that the line between these two would begin to blur. It is already blurred with regard to economic resources, since philanthropic organizations, in the United States at least, effectively spend tax money; but it would blur also with regard to personnel.

Consider, for example, the proposal that volunteers be paid by the state. They would receive, presumably, only nominal sums, rather as left-wing activists are paid subsistence (or less) for work in the movement. The aim is to make it possible for more people to volunteer and also to generate some greater consistency over time in voluntary service. Is the idea of a paid volunteer a contradiction in terms? Not so long as the individual is contributing time and energy (and, one hopes, a growing skillfulness) that would command much higher pay on the market.

Or, consider the proposal that we require a period of national service from all citizens and then direct some significant proportion of the

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conscripted time and energy into "helping" activities—working in hospitals, caring for the aged, and so on. There is no such thing, obviously, as a conscripted volunteer (though individual conscripts might well choose the particular service they performed). But conscription would introduce large numbers of amateurs into the work of distributing welfare, radically shifting the proportion of citizen helpers to professional helpers, just as military conscription shifts the proportion of citizen soldiers to professional soldiers. Nor would national service succeed in the absence of some degree of philanthropic feeling, any more than military conscription could succeed (in a democratic society) if citizens were not, to some degree, patriots.[2]

National service would draw in the young, but there is another group, with more time if less energy, who might play an even greater role in the delivery of services: the growing number of elderly and retired citizens. There seems no reason why they should not be helped to help one another or organized to look after infants and preschool children. The sorts of services they once "naturally" provided within the extended family now require alternative networks. State officials can probably play only a modest role in developing such networks, but insofar as they emerge, they might well be recognized within the state system—even subsidized in some small measure.

But if the measure is small, isn't this sort of thing properly called exploitation? The question has arisen chiefly with regard to women, who over the years have made up by far the greater number of volunteers. The growing strength of the women's movement and the growing number of women in the work force: both these factors help to explain the decline in volunteering. Why should women do without pay what men (and, increasingly, other women) get paid to do? It isn't likely, however, that any society can pay for all the helpfulness its members require. Nor is there any reason why it should. Helping others is a rewarding social activity, and the fact that some people make a career of it ought not to bar it to other people—ought not, certainly, to constitute an ideological bar.

In the past, women have formed what we might think of as the reserve army of the welfare system. It would be better, surely, to have a non-gender-specific reserve. In a fully developed welfare society, many more citizens would be ready to help, would actually be involved in helping. Help and be helped: the first would not be exploitative nor the second degrading. Assuming a rough equality in other respects (most important in opportunities for work), I don't see that it would matter much if a majority of the volunteers were women, any more than it would matter much if a majority of welfare professionals were women. These would just be interesting facts, reflecting customary behaviors slow to change, or a differential interest in nurturance, or (in the case of older volunteers) female longevity, or whatever.

I have focused first on the delivery of welfare, the everyday work of distribution, in part because of the failures of "maximum feasible participation" in the welfare programs of the 1960s. The War on Poverty was indeed an effort, the most recent effort, to socialize the welfare state. But this was a socialization focused almost exclusively on decision making. Behind it lay a conception taken over, perhaps unconsciously, from the literature on workers' control. Robert Kennedy made the argument as clearly as anyone in those years when he said of welfare bureaucrats in relation to their clients what socialist writers have often said of managers in relation to workers: "They plan programs for the poor, not with them. Part of the sense of helplessness and futility comes from the feeling of powerlessness to affect the operations of [the existing welfare agencies]." What was necessary was "the involvement of the poor in planning and implementing programs: giving them a real voice in their institutions."[3]

Planning and implementing: but most of the arguments, and all of the failed experiments, had to do with planning. The vitality of the institutions of the welfare state, Gunnar Myrdal insisted in the mid-1960s, depended on popular

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participation in their management and direction. The problem was that there were no significant cadres of welfare recipients ready for the hard work of managing and directing.

So the War on Poverty turned, very often, into a different sort of war: between radicalized professionals and middle-class organizers (joined by some local militants), on the one hand, and established professionals and lower-middle-class politicians, on the other. For neither group was it really feasible to maximize participation, though the politicians could probably have turned out more of the "people" if they were pressed. "It may be," writes Daniel Moynihan about these wars, "that the poor are never ready to assume power in an advanced society: the exercise of power in an effective manner is an ability acquired through apprenticeship and seasoning."[4] And apprenticeship and seasoning, Moynihan seems to think, come only through professional training and political office. He may be right, but it seems to me at least possible that participation in the delivery of services might constitute a kind of training for participation in the management and direction of services.

The War on Poverty might have fared better had there existed greater numbers of poor people with some experience of giving as well as taking. But the experience of giving, outside of the family, in the wider world of hospital auxiliaries, parent-teacher associations, church-run hostels and sanctuaries, and so on, is a characteristically middle-class experience. The poor (so we are told) have no time or, once their work is done, no energy.

In fact, of course, poor people have both time and energy, else there would never have been any political protest or union organizing, or friendly societies, or radical movements: all these are the work of volunteers, some of them, at least, recruited from the poor. Similarly, the poor could be recruited today for the work of mutual help, drawn into a range of distributive activities, so that they would begin to acquire some knowledge of the social economy of welfare to supplement the knowledge they already have of their private economies—both straitened, though in different ways. And then it might be more feasible to think about maximizing participation in decision making.

But it is wrong to describe the agencies of socialized distribution as if they "belonged" to the poor ("their institutions," as Kennedy said). Just as socialized factories don't belong only to the workers but also to the people who consume their products, so welfare agencies don't belong only to their consumers but also to the people who produce what is consumed.

This is to say again that socialization balances rather than replaces nationalization. When it deals with the productive sector, the state must represent consumers; when it deals with the distributive sector, the state must represent producers (taxpayers). In both cases, of course, it claims universality, but its officials speak first of all for those who are not present at the point of production or at the point of reception. That's why those who are present at the point have some claim to direct representation, to a "real voice" in decision making. But they have no claim to a sole voice.

The problem is to get the balance right. It makes sense, for example, to create a local governing board for a local welfare project (as in the War on Poverty programs), but it makes no sense to think that the governing board can replace the local government. The two must work together; perhaps the government must be represented on the board. "Seasoned" officials alongside the unseasoned poor? All the more reason to make sure that poor people experience something other than their own poverty.

The Distributive Society

The productive sector now absorbs a declining proportion of the work force—and will continue to do so unless (more likely, even if) we find new ways of dividing and sharing work. A growing proportion of men and women are involved instead in providing, delivering, organizing, and distributing human services. Many of these people are publicly employed, civil servants of the welfare state: school teachers, social workers, caretakers, and administrators of many different sorts; in Europe today, doctors and nurses. These are the agents of nationalized distribution, and their number is steadily growing. We might think of them as

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professional "helpers." Their aim is not the production of commodities but the enhancement of human life.

It is sometimes said of them, however, that they have a prior aim, namely, the control of the society whose members they help. They seek the enhancement of their own lives as professional helpers, and so have an interest in the helplessness of all the rest of us. That last is not likely to be an entirely conscious or widely acknowledged aim, but it undoubtedly does explain some of what they do.

What they do, though, they don't do by themselves; they have no monopoly on helping. They are both anticipated and seconded by private or nonprofit associations of many different kinds. The welfare state coexists with the welfare society, but the society today is relatively weak compared to the state. Extended families, friendly societies, churches, and fraternal organizations have lost their primacy in welfare provision, and no new groups have appeared to balance the triumphant civil service. The state is active—once again, for good reasons—and citizens are increasingly passive (or active only in demanding state action). Hence the need, and the recurrent efforts, to socialize state action itself.

Distribution and not production will, I think, be the first field of human activity to be socialized. Since most people will not be content with a world in which they are helpless (even if they are also, intermittently, helped), they will continue to find ways to help themselves and one another. The purpose of socialization is to provide new ways—a multitude of networks and institutions for mutual aid. This requires experiments in local democracy; it also requires an effort to extend the reach of voluntary organizations. And, at the same time, it requires a state strong enough to superintend and subsidize the work of citizens and volunteers. The greater the number of these citizens and volunteers, and the more work they do as part-time and amateur distributors of goods and services, the more likely it is that the professional helpers will really be helpful. A lively and supportive welfare society framed, but not controlled, by a strong welfare state: that would represent, to return for the last time to my analogy, a fundamental transformation in the relations of distribution. □

Notes

[1] Roger Hadley and Stephen Hatch, *Social Welfare and the Failure of the State* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981), p. 111; quoted in Neil Gilbert, *Capitalism and the Welfare State: Dilemmas of Social Benevolence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 169.

[2] It has been suggested to me that jury duty may be a better analogy here than military conscription—since the service required might be intermittent rather than continuous, extending for weeks rather than years. Juries too, as Tocqueville argued long ago, depend upon (and also strengthen) sentiments of civism.

[3] Quoted in Daniel P. Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York: Free Press, 1969), pp. 90–91.

[4] Ibid., pp. 136–137.

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Sanford Levinson

CLASHES OF TASTE IN CONSTITUTIONAL INTERPRETATION

Much of the contemporary debate about constitutional interpretation is carried on in the language of accountability. Constitutional interpretation is, after all, an "accounting" for a particular result that one views as required by the Constitution. And the overarching debate among constitutional interpreters concerns the existence of what might be termed "generally accepted principles of constitutional accounting" that will allow us to distinguish between proper decisions and distorted renderings of the Constitution. The opposite pole of such principles, of course, is suggested by the common expression, "There's no accounting for tastes." Are one's preferences in constitutional interpretation more than matters of mere taste? As Hamlet put it in another context, "That is the question."

Another important use of "accountability" in contemporary discourse, though, is that suggested by the debate surrounding the famed "counter-majoritarian difficulty" as propounded by the late Alexander Bickel.[1] The difficulty comes from a simple fact: Federal judges are not politically accountable to any electoral majorities, which is indeed a dilemma for a society committed broadly to a notion of democracy that makes decisionmakers accountable to those political majorities. One must then account for judicial authority in the absence of judicial accountability. Entire forests, of course, have been sacrificed to produce books attempting such an accounting.

I will argue in the first part of this essay, though, that the concern about political accountability expressed by Bickel and others comes not only from an esteem for the rights of political majorities but also, and just as importantly, from a diminished belief in the capacity to grasp, in any very satisfying way, the "meaning" of the Constitution as a foundational document or enclosed set of understandings. The absence of a generally accepted account of the Constitution "itself"—something I am tempted to label the constitutional *what*—has generated an increasing tendency to debate a quite different question: To *whom* should judges feel themselves accountable? As a result, I have argued elsewhere, much contemporary constitutional theory concentrates almost exclusively on the functions to be served by courts and judges, particularly the Supreme Court, and tends to leave "the Constitution," at least as traditionally understood, in abeyance.[2] If, however, we had more confidence in the "comprehensibility" of the Constitution, we would not be so tempted to seek out other justifications for judicial review that are so common today.

If part of the reason for the shape of contemporary constitutional theory is derived from the problematics of interpreting language in general, surely another part comes from a

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recognition of the tense relation between legal and moral norms. Constitutional theorists, whether self-consciously or not, present conceptions of the Constitution that they find worthy of moral commitment. Part of the difficulty, of course, is that we live our lives within a morally pluralistic order that itself has contributed to the constitutional disorderliness whose existence seems to be the only thing on which all constitutional theorists agree.

Tastes of the Founders

I begin with some comments on what might be termed "classical" constitutional theory, particularly as derived from John Marshall. There are significant differences between early nineteenth-century approaches to interpretation and those found today, and there is much contemporary debate about the possibility (and perhaps the merits as well) of returning to those earlier approaches. I think it fair to say that if we all subscribed to Marshall's own self-understanding (or at least the presentation) of his jurisprudence, there would be no dilemma to discuss. Marshall had (or at least articulated) sublime confidence in his ability to grasp and expound the Constitution. He seemed to suffer few doubts about the legitimacy of his enterprise, and I doubt that he would have found the modern discussion of accountability anything else than distracting.

The guiding rhetoric of Marshall's greatest decisions focuses on the principle of "constitutional supremacy"—the ability to measure a legislative act against the commands (and limits) established by the new document. Articulation of this principle is, of course, the central achievement of *Marbury* v. *Madison,* the 1803 decision that established the possibility of judicial review through its declaration of the unconstitutionality of a section of the Judiciary Act of 1789 passed by the first Congress.[3]

Marshall builds a triadic structure to support his ultimate decision. The first leg is the very *writtenness* of the Constitution.[4] Second is the *oath* taken by a judge to honor the commands of the document. "How immoral to impose it on [judges,]" Marshall exclaims, "if they were to be used as the instruments, and the knowing instruments, for violating what they swear to support!" Finally, there is the emphasis on the *clarity* of the language found in the written text that one has vowed to uphold: *Marbury* is a paean not only to writtenness; it celebrates as well the notion of constitutional plain style, of "express prohibition" and "obvious meaning." To interpret Article III in any other way than that proffered by Marshall would, he says, be to leave the clause being construed "inoperative."

It is a sign of Marshall's rhetorical success that most of the subsequent debate about *Marbury* has focused on the propriety of judicial review rather than on the fact that he is demonstrably wrong in his linguistic premises. As Professor Van Alstyne pointed out many years ago, the relevant clause of Article III is fatally ambiguous as to whether it confers to the Supreme Court "only" a given original jurisdiction or "at least" that jurisdiction.[5] Either can be plausibly defended; the only position that cannot be maintained, however, is Marshall's own, that the text speaks with a single obvious meaning. Few of Marshall's admirers, though, seem to hold this—or any of his other deviations from otherwise favored models of constitutional interpretation—against him.

Marshall's emphasis on constitutional clarity is repeated even when the "text" takes on a much more complicated dimension, as in his invalidation in *McCulloch* v. *Maryland* of an attempt by Maryland to impose a tax on the operations of the federally chartered Bank of the United States. There he conceded that "[t]here is no express provision for the case." That did not, however, make the Constitution any less clear in meaning, for Marshall asserted the existence of "a principle which so entirely pervades the constitution, is so intermixed with the materials which compose it, so interwoven with its web, so blended with its texture, as to be incapable of being separated from it, without rending it into shreds."[6]

To be sure, Marshall joins to these arguments about language and fidelity to the text an assertion about more Bickelian accountability; he vividly portrays a process of popular sovereignty that gave life to the document. From Hamilton's argument in the Seventy-

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Eighth Federalist Paper to the present, an important defense of constitutional sovereignty as enforced by judges has been that they are merely carrying out the wishes of the people as indicated in the text that they ratified. Obviously, that argument is not without bite even today, for it serves as part of the foundation of so-called "originalist" interpretive arguments that have become such an important part of the current debate. That being recognized, I nonetheless think it fair to say that the sovereign public was not envisioned by Marshall as an actual entity with continuing rights to challenge the handiwork of judges so much as an "ideal audience" that gave heart to the judges who had become its visible manifestation. The clarity with which this audience purportedly spoke was central to Marshall's self-justifying rhetoric. In any event, the judge's accountability was to the Constitution ratified by the people and available for inspection by the adjudicator.

To put it mildly, the tone of contemporary discussion of constitutional language is much less confident than that found in most of Marshall's major pronouncements. In place of assertions of clarity are recognitions of complexity and, some would say, endless ambiguity. Some of this recognition is the product simply of the fact that contemporary analysis tends to focus on what Justice Jackson once called the "majestic generalities" of clauses promising "equal protection" and "due process of law." One need not be a modernist philosopher or a legal realist to find these terms less than transparent. Some contemporary analysts do, however, base their arguments on particular philosophical premises associated with "modernism." Many contemporary articles are replete with references to Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, or Derrida, not to mention homegrown writers like Stanley Fish and Richard Rorty. But it is worth noting that there is nothing substantially new in skepticism about the clarity of language.

Skeptical theories emerge among nominalists in the late middle ages and burst into major political theory in the writings of Thomas Hobbes. At least some of what we sometimes label peculiarly "modern" ideas were in fact available within eighteenth-century culture. No better evidence can be found than James Madison's own analysis of language in the Thirty-Seventh Federalist Paper.[7] Indeed, I think it indicative of the new interest in interpretive theory that it has become one of the most widely discussed of the Federalist Papers at bicentennial symposia, and it is worth a momentary digression to consider Madison's argument.

Madison notes some of the limits of what we today might call "hard" sciences. "The most sagacious and laborious naturalists have never yet succeeded, in tracing with certainty, the line which separates the district of vegetable life from the neighboring region of unorganized matter." What is true of discussions of nature is even more true of attempts to organize "the institutions of man." "[N]o skill in the science of Government has yet been able to discriminate and define, with sufficient certainty . . . even the privileges and powers of the different Legislative branches." One finds that "obscurity . . . reigns in these subjects," and the reason is not incapacity but the limits of humankind, including the limits of language. "[T]he medium through which the conceptions of men are conveyed to each other, adds a fresh embarrassment," for "no language is so copious as to supply words and phrases for every complex idea," leading to an "unavoidable inaccuracy" whenever speech is used in regard to something so complex as human governance. Madison clinches his argument by making reference to the Bible itself: "When the Almighty himself condescends to address mankind in their own language, his meaning, luminous as it must be, is rendered dim and doubtful, by the cloudy medium through which it is communicated." It is hard to imagine a contemporary deconstructionist expressing a greater skepticism about the likelihood (or perhaps even possibility) of *Marbury*-asserted plain meanings.

Madison indirectly challenges a foundation stone of classical constitutional jurisprudence—the ability to define firmly bounded categories, whether "taxation," "interstate commerce," or whatever, whose recognition would allow a firm division to be created

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between constitutional application and more ordinary political assessment. Alexander Hamilton, for example, had strongly argued, in his defense of the constitutionality of the Bank of the United States, that "[t]he *degree* in which a measure is necessary, can never be a test of the *legal* right to adopt it. That must ever be a matter of opinion; and can only be a test of expediency." The "criterion of constitutionality," according to Hamilton, was "[t]he *relation* between the *measure* and the *end*" and distinctly "not the more or less of *necessity* or *utility*."[8] Hamilton is drawing, of course, on the classical distinction between opinion and knowledge, and he is suggesting that constitutional adepts can strive toward genuine knowledge that is altogether different from the mere opinion found when one discusses the "expediency" of a particular matter.

Marshall gladly borrowed from this argument in his invalidation of the Maryland tax. Some lawyers had plausibly suggested that the Constitution did not prohibit *all* state taxes on federal instrumentalities, but only overbearing ones. That is, judgments of degree would be necessary. Responded Marshall, "We are not driven to the perplexing inquiry, so unfit for the judicial department, what degree of taxation is the legitimate use, and what degree may amount to the abuse of power." Instead, a categorical anathema was delivered: *All* such taxes would be prohibited.

This conceptual world is even more lost to most of us than is the world of plain meanings. We are, I would suggest, *all* balancers now, recognizing that constitutional interpretation, including that engaged in by judges, invariably involves judgments of degree. Alex Aleinikoff has called our era "the Age of Balancing." The Supreme Court for the past several decades has "applied a balancing approach to area after area in constitutional law" that "has transformed constitutional adjudication and constitutional law." In his nicely put comment, "familiarity [has] bred consent."[9] Marshall had based his decision in *McCulloch* on what Justice Frankfurter has nicely labeled a "rhetorical absolute."[10] "[T]he power to tax is the power to destroy," he claimed. Replacing the absolute, presumably, is the new, more "realist" understanding of Frankfurter's great mentor, Justice Holmes, who had observed that "[i]n those days," i.e., the dim past of our primitive ancestors, "it was not recognized as it is today that most of the distinctions of the law are distinctions of degree." He thus went on to offer a counter to Marshall: "The power to tax is not the power to destroy while this Court sits."[11] Obviously, it would be up to "this Court" (or in practice some lower federal court) to decide how destructive a given tax was. And, to revert once more to Frankfurter, one must always remember "that the 'Constitution' which [the justices] 'interpret' is to a large measure the interpretation of *their own experiences,* their 'judgment about practical matters,' their 'ideal picture of the social order.' "[12] Those of us attracted to the theme of irony in political thought should surely enjoy the embrace of Justice Frankfurter by at least some contemporary "conservatives" who preach the return to much more categorical understandings of the Constitution, for practically no one was more important than Frankfurter in demolishing the cogency of such understandings.

Perhaps the best single example of the interpretive world within which we now live is provided by *Home Building and Loan Association* v. *Blaisdell,*[13] one of the fundamental decisions in the jurisprudence of the modern, semiredistributive welfare state. That case involved the constitutional propriety of a law passed by the Minnesota legislature during the Great Depression that imposed a "moratorium" on the duty of homeowners to make their mortgage payments. (One must understand that the common form of mortgage financing in those days involved so-called "balloon payments" at the end of a contract rather than the amortized equal monthly payments common today. Thus homeowners who regularly paid, say, $100 per month to the bank might find themselves facing a final payment of $5,000, with the bank unwilling to "roll over" this sum into a new mortgage.) Although homeowners were required to pay the banks monthly interest payments, the banks nonetheless sued, claiming that their contract rights were protected by the United States Constitution. The contract clause of the Constitution states that "No State

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shall . . . pass any . . . Law impairing the Obligation of Contracts."

Chief Justice Hughes, viewing the legislation as a "reasonable means to safeguard the economic structure upon which the good of all depends," wrote for a five-justice majority to sustain the depression-era statute. Hughes rejected "the perversion of the clause through its use as an instrument to throttle the capacity of the States to protect their fundamental interests." One might think that both clarity and categorization join to invalidate a state law that suspends the contractual duty of mortgage holders to comply with the terms of their mortgages. So held Justice Sutherland, writing an eloquent and outraged dissent that is viewed by most legal academics as the last great statement of reactionary formalism. Hughes, however, rejects not only the dictionary meaning of the particular words constituting the clause, but also the most likely intentions of its authors. Instead he quotes Marshall: "We must never forget that it is *a constitution* we are expounding—a constitution intended to endure for ages to come, and consequently to be adapted to the various *crises* of human affairs."

It is worth noting Marshall's emphasis on the word "crises"; one might think that an equally important word, well worth emphasis on its own, is "adapted." We might ponder at this point an observation by James Boyd White in regard to Marshall's opinion in *McCulloch*—that it "seems to be less an interpretation of the Constitution than an amendment to it, the overruling of which is unimaginable."[14] What I find intriguing is that White does not appear to be leveling a criticism against either the opinion or Marshall. He comes truly to praise Marshall rather than to criticize him. But if White is correct—that is, if we share both his perception and his willingness to commend Marshall's performance in *McCulloch*—then we need to recast much of the contemporary debate about constitutional interpretation. This debate in substantial measure concerns the limits to the authority of constitutional interpreters, whether judges or others. Presumably the "best" judges are the ones who recognize such limits and stay within them. But what do we do with Marshall in terms of the conventional debate?

Indeed, part of the rhetorical success of Hughes' opinion in *Blaisdell* is precisely the linkage of Marshall and Holmes, which calls into question the opposition set up earlier between "classical" and "modernist" modes of interpretation. As if to underscore the point about Marshallian adaptation, Hughes quotes Holmes's statement that the authors of the Constitution "called into life a being the development of which could not have been foreseen completely by the most gifted of its begetters" and the interpretation of which demands consideration "of our whole experience and not merely . . . of what was said a hundred years ago." So much for "the jurisprudence of original intent." Indeed, my colleague Lucas Powe has suggested that the contemporary citation of Marshall's evocation of "a constitution" is an almost sure signal that the Court is about to confound one's "common sense" reading of the Constitution in favor of what Justice Holmes, in another context, called the "felt necessities of the times." The task constructed for the constitutional interpreter by *Blaisdell* in almost every case features the Court engaging in precisely what Hamilton and Marshall professed to fear and to condemn as outside the realm of knowledge of the well-trained lawyer: the making of exquisite calculations of degree and expediency before entering judgment.

I mention *Blaisdell* in part because of its inherent interest. But it is useful for another reason, the fact that almost all "liberals" support it. I suspect that few readers of *Dissent* would object to the bland restatement by the Court only last year that "it is well-settled that the prohibition against impairing the obligation of contracts is not to be read literally."[15] A different tune is often heard, of course, in regard to the First Amendment, which has the same linguistic structure as the contract clause. Many of us remember when Hugo Black structured much of his jurisprudence around the notion that "no law" meant "no law." Yet I think it is significant that far fewer voices are heard these days emulating the linguistic formalism of Justice Black. The initial attack on Black's views, of course, came from those identified as more conservative politically. But

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even the academic left is ever less willing to make Blackian arguments today. Consider the very significant article by Yale Law School Professor Owen Fiss in the hundredth anniversary issue of the *Harvard Law Review*, where he calls on his fellow liberals to move beyond sterile First Amendment formalism in precisely the same way they have proved willing to reject categorical formalism in regard to property or contract.[16] The particular issue that Fiss focuses on is regulation of campaign financing; an earlier article by Cass Sunstein of the University of Chicago Law School made similar arguments in regard to sexually explicit materials deemed degrading to women.[17] Given their rejection of formalism in these particular contexts, it is hard to believe that they would be able, even if they wished, to return to a formalism in regard even to more "standard-instance" cases of freedom of speech. That does not mean, of course, that Fiss and Sunstein would be less speech-protective in these standard instances, but only that they could not take refuge in the textual prohibition of the First Amendment. Some other defense would be necessary.

Probably the most important contribution of Owen Fiss to contemporary constitutional debate, however, has come in his emphasis on the third issue raised in my introductory comments—the "fit" between the Constitution and morality. He has denounced that "arid and artificial conception of interpretation" he labels "textual determinism," which he links with that form of legal positivism that emphasizes "the 'written constitution' and stresses factors like the use of particular words or the intent or beliefs of the framers, *all of which have little or no moral relevance*."[18] The problems with these modes of interpretation go well beyond the theoretical difficulties in ascertaining the true meaning of the text or the intentions of its authors, which for some are enough to doom them as coherent enterprises.[19] As Fiss well argues, even if one assumes the theoretical plausibility of the positivist enterprise, there remains the problem that "[a] too rigid insistence on positivism will inevitably bring into question the ultimate moral authority of the legal text—the justness of the Constitution."

Fiss concedes, for example, that an all-too-comprehensible Constitution might well be read to have protected slavery. But such a Constitution would be unworthy of respect and obedience. As Frederick Douglass put it, when he still viewed the Constitution as "a pro-slavery instrument," it was a document "I cannot bring myself to vote under, or swear to support."[20] Indeed, as Fiss points out, the mere ability to raise the possibility that the Constitution is immoral indicates "[a] moment of crisis in the life of a constitution."

To be sure, Fiss believes that a solution to any such crisis lies in a judge's willingness "[t]o read the moral as well as the legal text. The judge quickly learns to read in a way that avoids crises." Indeed, he accords the judiciary a "[s]pecial competence to interpret a text such as the Constitution, and to render specific and concrete the public morality embodied in that text."

Fiss is less than clear on the source of the "moral text." The last sentence quoted above seems to suggest that there is a "public morality embodied in [the] text" of the Constitution itself, but he had earlier announced his enterprise as following from the constitutional delegitimation that occurs if one too unimaginatively focuses on such presumably textual embodied practices as slavery. I find more plausible the view that one finds that "moral text," assuming it exists at all, in the basic assumptions that have undergirded our polity over these many years.

Perhaps the classic articulation of this view is a magnificent opinion by Justice Harlan in which he justifies his willingness to strike down the Connecticut prohibition on the use of contraceptives that was indeed to be invalidated several years later in the now-famous *Griswold* case.[21] Harlan refused to reduce notions of due process "to any formula; its content cannot be determined by reference to any code," including, presumably, the constitutional text itself. Instead, the judge looks to the "balance which our Nation, built upon postulates of respect for the liberty of the individual, has struck between that liberty and the demands of organized society. . . ." The source of information about

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this balance is "what history teaches are the traditions from which [our Nation] developed as well as the traditions from which it broke. That tradition is a living thing." I cannot resist, incidentally, the observation that Justice Harlan seems considerably more "Burkean" than are some of the "New Right" opponents of such decisions as *Griswold*.

Stephen Macedo, while defending what he terms "principled activism" against critics from the New Right, has recently issued a call somewhat similar to that of Fiss. Macedo argues that "[b]y fusing constitutional interpretation and moral theory, principled activism vindicates the Constitution's authority by establishing its rightness."[22] Macedo is not altogether clear on what moral theory he prefers, but it seems to derive in part at least from classical natural law. One suspects that Macedo would endorse certain Marshallian hints that principles of natural justice were part of the American constitutional corpus.[23]

Such views are obviously enticing because they promise a pleasant resolution to any perceived conflict between law and morality. Little credence is given to the possibility that life under even the American Constitution may be a tragedy, presenting irresolvable conflicts between the realms of law and morality. I want to go next to a consideration of this aspect of constitutional interpretation.

Tastes of the Moderns

Consider one of John Marshall's most interesting cases, albeit not part of the Marshallian "canon" taught in our classrooms. It is, to be sure, not a constitutional opinion, but it is no less relevant for that. The case is *The Antelope*.[24] It concerns the importation of slaves into the United States, which had been prohibited by Congress in 1808. A ship, the Antelope, was apprehended off the coast of Florida by a United States revenue cutter; 280 Africans were on board. United States law of the time provided that persons discovered attempting to import slaves would forfeit their ships and that the slaves would be returned to Africa. What made the case difficult is that the Antelope was in the control of pirates who had seized the Africans from several slave ships. The original Spanish and Portuguese "owners" of the slaves sued to get their "property" back, claiming that *they* had not attempted to circumvent the American law and that they therefore deserved to have their slaves returned to them. Marshall wrote the opinion for a unanimous Court ordering the return of at least some of the slaves to their "owners." He adopts a very different rhetoric from that observed in *Fletcher*, the case that seemed to embrace natural justice as a constitutionally regulative norm.

He begins his discussion by reminding the reader that "this court must not yield to feelings which might seduce it from the path of duty"; it "must obey the mandate of the law." But what might be the seduction that so worries Marshall? The answer, of course, lies in the moral claims to be made against slavery and the concomitant temptation to act in accordance with those claims. Marshall is anticipating the argument that would later be placed in the mouth of Captain Vere by Melville in *Billy Budd:* "Our vowed responsibility is in this: That however pitilessly that law may operate in any instances, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it."[25]

Justice Story, one of Marshall's colleagues, had earlier denounced the slave trade as "repugnant to the great principles of Christian duty, the dictates of natural religion, the obligations of good faith and morality, and the eternal maxims of social justice." And he had gone on to say that "it is impossible that [the trade] can be consistent with any system of law that purports to rest on the authority of reason or revelation."[26] Marshall himself notes how "abhorrent this traffic may be to a mind whose original feelings are not blunted by familiarity with the practice." Indeed, it "will scarcely be denied" that slavery "is contrary to the law of nature."

All of this having been said, though, the Court cannot escape recognizing that "[t]he Christian and civilized nations of the world, with whom we have most intercourse, have all been engaged in" the slave trade and that established international law protects the trade, at least in the absence of domestic prohibition. The United States can surely prevent Americans from engaging in the trade and, of course,

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can prevent anyone from importing slaves into the United States. But, Marshall held, the United States must recognize the claims of "innocent" foreign owners who were not violating the law of their own countries in attempting to ship slaves to a country that could legally receive them. Similarly, Story, whatever his views about the morality of slavery, upheld the constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 when it was challenged in *Prigg* v. *Pennsylvania*.[27]

It is hard indeed to see why one should admire a Constitution that "requires" such results. Surely one should try to construct a theory of constitutional interpretation that generates a Constitution that *is* admirable. Perhaps there are times when that is impossible; that, after all, might be the function of constitutional amendments, to transform the unacceptable into the tolerable. But I am curious why anyone would adopt a theory of interpretation that would not try to minimize the number of times that one would feel torn between one's roles as "jurist" and "moralist," if one takes either law *or* morality with sufficient seriousness.

How does one interpret the Constitution or resolve a delicate constitutional controversy? I find Ronald Dworkin's phenomenological analysis, particularly as presented in his most recent book, *Law's Empire*, to be quite helpful. For Dworkin the task of the legal analyst is to embed a particular analysis within an overall interpretive narrative that binds together the wide range of relevant legal materials into a story capable of gaining our respect. Someone trying to interpret a legal system must "impose *meaning* on the institution—to see it in its best light," and to resolve disputes accordingly. Respect comes because the audience of the narrator recognizes the narrative as drawing on what is best within the range of its cultural possibilities. The Dworkinian narrative makes "a complex claim: that present practice can be organized by and justified in principles sufficiently attractive to provide an honorable future."

To declare that something is "the law" is not merely to say that someone with power desires a particular outcome. Instead, "[w]hen a judge declares that a particular principle is instinct in law," he is making "an interpretive proposal: that the principle both fits and justifies some complex part of legal practice, that it provides an attractive way to see, in the structure of that practice, the consistency of principle integrity requires." Dworkin's argument in many ways reduces to one of interpretive charity; i.e., in reading someone, whether friend or foe, interpret his or her remarks in a way that maximizes the ability to respect what is being said. There is an affinity between Dworkin's emphasis on the duty of the judge to provide "attractive" narratives and Sotirios Barber's insistence that the Constitution be interpreted "aspirationally," as containing "the best conception of the good society known to us for the time being," even as we recognize that those conceptions might change at some future point.[28]

At one level, it seems impossible to dispute Dworkin and Barber, for why would a constitutional analyst ever prefer a "less attractive" conception of the Constitution to a "more attractive" one? If we wish to respect the Constitution, then surely the most plausible operative rule of interpretation is something like, "Always adopt the interpretation that makes the Constitution most worthy of respect."

We have earlier seen how slavery provides a central interpretive dilemma for those who would moralize the Constitution. Recall, for example, Frederick Douglass's statement describing the Constitution as "a pro-slavery instrument" that he simply could not "swear to support" or, presumably, to respect. One can observe, however, in Douglass's own thought the application of the maxim of charitable interpretation as a means of extricating oneself from what would otherwise be a terrible bind.

Douglass engaged in a remarkable reversal of belief, delivering in Glasgow, Scotland, on March 26, 1860, a spirited defense of the Constitution, which he now described as "anti-slavery."[29] At no time did he deny that many of the framers were sympathetic to slavery or that the Supreme Court had interpreted the document to protect the institu-

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tion. What he disputed is that the Constitution, correctly interpreted, required such an outcome.[30]

Instead, Douglass "den[ied] that the Constitution guarantees the right to hold property in man." The national government could therefore abolish slavery upon the election to office "as will use their powers for the abolition of slavery." The crucial point, of course, is that the use of such power would be entirely congruent with fidelity to the Constitution.

Douglass's interpretive strategy is summarized in two "rules of interpretation" that he offers: (1) "[T]he language of the law must be construed strictly in favour of justice and liberty."; (2) "Where a law is susceptible of two meanings, the one making it accomplish an innocent meaning, and the other making it accomplish a wicked purpose, we must in all cases adopt that which makes it accomplish an innocent purpose." He goes on to use these rules to establish his antislavery reading of the Constitution.

Thus, in regard to the entrenchment of the slave trade until 1808, he says that it is equally important that the Constitution clearly countenanced its abolition, at least after 1808; even more significant, according to Douglass, is the fact that most thinkers in 1787 "looked upon the slave trade as the life of slavery" and therefore presumed that its abolition would lead to "the certain death of slavery." Thus, "American statesmen, in providing for the abolition of the slave trade, thought they were providing for the abolition of slavery." Article V, "if made to refer to the African slave trade at all, makes the Constitution anti-slavery rather than for slavery, for it says to the slave States, the price you will have to pay for coming into the American Union is, that the slave trade, which you would carry on indefinitely out of the Union, shall be put an end to in twenty years if you come into the Union. . . . [T]he intentions of the framers of the Constitution were good, not bad. . . ."

One may or may not be entirely persuaded by Douglass's argument, but it is an excellent example of how the principle of charity operates. The point is that one cannot begin to engage in constitutional interpretation without having in mind a model of the point of the entire constitutional enterprise. That point of the American Constitution, if we are indeed to have any "faith" in its goodness, must be to achieve a political order worthy of respect, and there is a very heavy burden of proof on any analyst who would say that the Constitution *must* be interpreted in a way that brings it into disrespect.

Identical arguments operate, of course, even if one declares that he or she is going to follow the "original intentions" of the constitutional authors, for everyone agrees that these intentions are never self-declaring; they themselves must be interpreted, and Douglass's "rules" seem more attractive than any competitor's. Thus, when Robert Bork argues in behalf of "the proposition that the framers' intentions with respect to freedoms are the sole legitimate premise from which constitutional analysis may proceed,"[31] we are still left with the task of constructing a model "framer" whose stipulated intentions can breathe life into a disputed text. Why would we model a framer whose intentions do not include a commitment to the moral worthiness of the overall enterprise, of which the particular clause being interpreted is itself only a part and against which it must inevitably be analyzed?

This is the point captured so well in Ronald Dworkin's introduction of his well-known distinction between "concepts" and "conceptions." Dworkin speaks of a father's telling his children that they should adopt as their guide for the treatment of others the *concept* of "fairness" or "respect." It may be that the father (sincerely) holds a *conception* of "fairness" that allows chattel slavery, but most of us believe that the children would be more faithful to their instructions if they ended up freeing the slaves, after developing a more sensitive understanding of what "fairness" and "respect" require of one, than if they woodenly adhered to the parental conception. According to Dworkin, the father might well, indeed *should,* be treated as having said that he "meant the family to be guided by the *concept* of fairness, not by any specific *conception* of fairness I might have had in mind."[32]

This principle of interpretation, and the

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necessary joinder of law and morals that is entailed, seems clearest when one is discussing not the judge but rather the ordinary official who has made his or her own promise to be guided by the Constitution. In determining what the Constitution might "require" of them, they must surely resolve to decide any of their own mental disputes in favor of the most respectworthy conception of the Constitution, where respect is defined in terms of the values enunciated by the preamble to the Constitution, with its insistence on the blessings of liberty and the promotion of justice. It is obviously irrelevant that a "framer" of the Constitution might have had a different understanding of what specifically was respectworthy; what one can assume is that he wished to be himself a person worthy of respect. Different historical understandings, under this view, demonstrate the existence of different conceptions of what makes one worthy of respect but not the repudiation by the earlier individual or culture of the basic norm of respect.

What explains, then, the fact that Dworkin's and Barber's ideas are extremely controversial within the legal community? The answer is that their opponents are fundamentally dubious of the existence of a shared moral reality, even if interpreted, as Dworkin would wish, only as a shared set of conventional narratives that set out the social meanings we ascribe to our lives. Instead, their critics would argue that we live in a radically pluralistic world. It is not only that beauty (or "attractiveness") lies in the eye of the beholder—for Dworkin (though not Barber) in substantial ways would agree—but that there are simply too many beholders, each with his or her own idiosyncratic sense of beauty. There is thus a disinclination to accept the reality of the "we" or "us" so often invoked by these theorists. A Holmesian emphasis on fundamental social and intellectual cleavage has displaced a more reassuring image of unity and underlying consensus.

The principle of interpretive charity, it has been pointed out to me, threatens to become vacuous in the face of significant pluralism, for what is charity to one person will appear officious intermeddling to another. And I have no clue as to what meta-principles might resolve those conflicts. Indeed, I think it important to be reminded that law almost certainly cannot resolve truly fundamental conflict, as is certainly the case with our own Constitution. Nothing is gained, and much is lost, by pretending, as one bicentennial button put it, that the Constitution is "still working after 200 years." As Joyce Appleby so aptly rejoined, it was in the shop for at least four of those years and emerged with a fundamentally new motor when the Reconstruction Congress, acting with questionable legality, finished amending the failed Constitution of 1787.

Let me summarize, then, my discussion of constitutional accounting. I have suggested that we are, at best, uncertain about the existence of a stable Constitution to which we can genuinely expect accountability on the part of judges who have solemnly pledged to be bound by it. The documentary Constitution is evoked, to be sure, but in Paul Brest's marvelously troubling metaphor, "It is rather like having a remote ancestor who came over on the Mayflower."[33] One stares at the portrait and may even discern (and suggest to others) a family resemblance across the generations. Yet one nonetheless knows how terribly distant, how truly lost, are the life and culture of the ancestor.

Indeed, what one does is reinterpret the link to that ancestor *not* by pretending to a fully shared substantive culture that surely does not exist, but rather by emphasizing as part of that ancestor's legacy the existential courage that he or she required to leave the security of an old order, to smash its idols, as it were, and to forge a new life in a new land. So we end up honoring our constitutional fathers (who, alas, allowed almost no role for constitutional "mothers") by doing what they did to *their* parents, i.e., leaving them behind and forging new worlds, including the linguistic and conceptual, for ourselves. And, just as branches of the family tree can take on very different appearances, so do "we" end up with strikingly different versions both of what counts as maintaining the constitutional tradition and of what "accounts" we give for our particular constitutional renderings. That, I think, is the reality facing those of us who purport to be

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constitutional theorists. One need not be so pessimistic as to proclaim that "whirl is king," but it seems to me that recognition of our fundamental pluralism could only be helpful to the way in which we engage in our arguments with one another. □

NOTES

[1] Alexander Bickel, *The Least Dangerous Branch* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1962), pp. 16–23.

[2] See Sanford Levinson, "Judicial Review and the Problem of the Comprehensible Constitution," *Texas Law Review* 59 (1981): 395 and "The Turn Toward Functionalism in Constitutional Theory," *Dayton Law Review* 8 (1983): 567.

[3] *Marbury* v. *Madison,* 1 Cranch (5 U.S.) 137 (1803). The quoted passages come from pp. 175–180.

[4] Marshall deems "a written constitution" to be "the greatest improvement on political institutions" introduced by the founders of the new political order in the United States. *Id.* on p. 178.

[5] William Van Alstyne, "A Critical Guide to *Marbury* v. *Madison,*" *Duke Law Journal* 1 (1969): 30–31.

[6] 17 U.S. (4 Wheat.) pp. 316, 426 (1819).

[7] All of the quotations below are taken from Jacob Cooke, ed., *The Federalist* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), pp. 234–237.

[8] See Alexander Hamilton, "Opinion on the Constitutionality of an Act to Establish a Bank," reprinted in Paul Brest and Sanford Levinson, *Processes of Constitutional Decisionmaking* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1983), pp.15–18. The quoted passages can be found on p. 17.

[9] T. Alexander Aleinikoff, "Constitutional Law in the Age of Balancing," *Yale Law Journal* 96 (1987) 943–45 (1987).

[10] *Graves* v. *O'Keefe,* 306 U.S. 466, 489 (1939) (Frankfurter, J., concurring).

[11] See *Panhandle Oil Co.* v. *Knox,* 277 U.S. 218, 223 (1928) (Holmes, J., dissenting).

[12] Philip Kurland, ed., *Felix Frankfurter on the Supreme Court* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 119–120.

[13] 290 U.S. 398 (1934).

[14] James Boyd White, *When Words Lose Their Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 263.

[15] *Keystone Bituminous Coal Association* v. *DeBenedictis,* 107 S.Ct. 1232, 1251 (1987).

[16] Owen Fiss, "Why the State?" *Harvard Law Review* 100 (1987): 781.

[17] Cass Sunstein, "Pornography and the First Amendment," 1986 *Duke Law Journal* 589 (1986).

[18] Owen Fiss, "Objectivity and Interpretation," *Stanford Law Review* 34 (1982): 739, 753 (emphasis added). All further quotations from Fiss come from this article.

[19] See, e.g., Paul Brest, "The Misconceived Quest for the Original Understanding," *Boston University Law Review* 60 (1980): 204.

[20] Frederick Douglass to C.H. Chase, "The North Star," February 9, 1849, in P. Foner, ed., *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (New York: International Publishers, 1950), Vol. 1, p. 353.

[21] Harlan's opinion was written in *Poe* v. *Ullman,* 367 U.S. 497 (1961). He wrote a brief concurrence in *Griswold* v. *Connecticut,* 381 U.S. 479 (1966), based on "reasons stated at length" in *Poe.*

[22] Stephen Macedo, *The New Right* v. *The Constitution* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 1986), p. 4.

[23] See *Fletcher* v. *Peck,* 6 Cranch 87 (1810), in which the Supreme Court, through Marshall, invalidated an attempt by the Georgia Legislature to undo the earlier sale by Georgia of lands comprising what are now the states of Alabama and Mississippi.

[24] 23 U.S. (10. Wheat.) 66 (1825). See generally John T. Noonan, Jr., *The Antelope: The Ordeal of the Recaptured Africans in the Administrations of James Monroe and John Quincy Adams* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

[25] Herman Melville, *Billy Budd,* Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 111. Robert Cover, who points out that Melville's father-in-law was an important Massachusetts judge who on occasion ruled against the claims to freedom of slaves, uses *Billy Budd* as a foundation for understanding the rhetoric of the judiciary in *Justice Accused: Antislavery and the Judicial Process* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975). For a very different reading of Captain Vere, which views his claims of legal accountability as being in bad faith, see Richard Weisberg, *The Failure of the Word* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 147.

[26] *United States* v. *La Jeune Eugénie,* 26 F. Cas. 832 (C.C. Mass. 1822).

[27] 41 U.S. (16 Pet.) 536 (1842).

[28] Sotirios Barber, *On What the Constitution Means* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1984), p. 57. Michael Perry also makes an extended "aspirational" argument in Chapter 7 of his forthcoming book on constitutional interpretation to be published by the Oxford University Press.

[29] "The Constitution of the United States: Is It Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery?" *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (New York: International Publishers, 1950), Vol. 2, pp. 467–480.

[30] It is worth noting that Dworkin presents a somewhat

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similar reading of the Constitution in "The Law of the Slave-Catchers," *Times Literary Supplement,* December 5, 1975, p. 1437 (reviewing Robert Cover, *Justice Accused*).

[31] Robert Bork, "Tradition and Morality in Constitutional Law," in Mark Cannon and David O'Brien, eds., *Views from the Bench: The Judiciary and Constitutional Politics* (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, 1985), p. 171.

[32] Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 133–135. See also Barber, *On What the Constitution Means,* pp. 117–119 (1984).

[33] Brest, "The Misconceived Quest," p. 234.

FRED SIEGEL COMMENTS

Two questions inform Sandy Levinson's essay. He asks (a) why we should respect and obey the law, particularly when there is so often a tension between morality and law, and (b) by what authority judges impose their will on the rest of us. Levinson and his academic colleagues are not alone in questioning the current judicial regime. A recent poll conducted by the *National Law Journal* found that three-quarters of the voters favored the election of lower-court judges, three-fifths favored the election of Supreme Court judges, and nine out of ten wanted to replaced life tenure for federal judges with fixed terms.

The logic of Levinson's essay and the examples he uses, such as the *Antelope* case, suggest that the problem of respect for the law derives, as Ronald Dworkin and Owen Fiss would agree, from our failure to bridge the gap between law and moral purpose. But the evidence suggests that, to the contrary, the current dissatisfaction with the courts has come precisely because of the efforts, left and right, to bridge that gap.

Justice Robert Bork's criticisms, during the recent hearings on his appointment to the Supreme Court, of the landmark *Griswold* case, which helped establish the "right" of privacy, were to some degree both intellectually persuasive and a replication of the earlier criticisms of that great New Deal liberal Justice Hugo Black. But they were entirely beside the point. The public, unconcerned with technical niceties, simply wants a generalized right of privacy, the New Right and the arguments be damned. The defeat of the New Right on the privacy, issue led some like Anthony Lewis to see the Bork hearings as a generalized vindication of the Warren Court in particular and judicial activism in general. But in fact on issues like racial quotas, abortion, and school prayer, overwhelming majorities are strongly opposed to the current rulings. For these majorities, the problem is that the Court has imposed its own version of the Constitution's hidden "moral text."

Most readers will, I suspect, have been enlightened by Levinson's use of Frederick Douglass to give a better account of Dworkin's theory of judging than Dworkin gives for himself. But Levinson, uncharacteristically sympathetic to Dworkin, gives only a passing indication of the deeply contradictory nature of Dworkin's argument.

Dworkin tries to assure us that, having abandoned fidelity to the written Constitution, his superhuman judge "Hercules" will not be free simply to impose his own will on legal disputes. Hercules's narrative interpretation, he tells us, will be constrained by community values. Therein lies the rub. What makes for a community, says Lord Devlin, is that people share "not political ideas alone but also ideas about the way its members should behave and govern their lives." But even as Dworkin tries to anchor his arguments in community, he is also fundamentally committed on the basis of our constitutional "moral text" to an individual's right to personal autonomy, independent of the perceived moral consequences for others. This is a combination that cannot hold. The practical effect of insisting on absolute moral

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autonomy is to destroy community sentiment by putting individual behavior beyond not only the reach of government, but of social censure as well. Dworkin's justification of judicial power is, in short, a purely academic construct that, when applied as in *Roe* v. *Wade,* is incapable of commanding the community assent on which it is supposedly based.

Levinson himself is caught between the logic of his argument for the unintelligibility of a written Constitution, which most reasonably leads to judicial restraint, and his desire to narrow the gap between law and morality, which leads to judicial activism. It's an insoluble dilemma within the confines of the judicial sphere, and he wisely concludes by preaching tolerance. The dilemma's resolution, insofar as there is one, probably lies outside the courts. The demands of justice might best be served by reducing the liberal dependence on priests in black judicial robes as a way of sparking liberalism's political revival. □

Sanford Levinson will return to these issues in a future issue of Dissent—Eds.

dissent

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Economic Justice

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

A STATEMENT ON SOCIAL POLICY

A statement on social policy remarkable for its clarity and courage has come from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in association with the Canadian Labour Congress, the Confederation of Canadian Unions, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and the United Church of Canada. Other organizations are being asked to endorse it. We are pleased to be able to present this text to readers in the United States.—EDS.

As socially concerned people in labor unions, women's organizations, welfare rights associations, church organizations, aboriginal groups, and other community associations, we are alarmed by signs of deepening social crisis in Canada today. Plant shutdowns, farm bankruptcies, business failures, and abandoned communities have left well over a million and a half people unemployed, thus deprived of an adequate family or personal income. During the past two years alone, nearly a million people have become dependent on welfare. Close to one out of every five citizens in Canada is now living at or below the official poverty line.

As members of various popular organizations, we wish to declare our solidarity with all those people who have become the victims of the continuing social and economic crisis in this country. Indeed, we stand in the tradition of popular movements that have relentlessly struggled for public policies based on economic and social justice in Canada. Today, more than ever, we must resist the strategies of divide and conquer and unite in common cause. We therefore invite other members of our own organizations, as well as other concerned persons and groups in communities and regions across Canada, to join with us in a process of analyzing the realities and causes of the present socioeconomic crisis and identifying alternative economic and social policy directions.

Social Crisis

Today, the living signs of this social crisis are all around us. The relentless lineups at food banks and the increasing number of homeless and hungry people on our streets dramatize the realities of this social tragedy. All across Canada, these new trends of poverty, homelessness, and hunger are manifesting themselves in different degrees between regions and within both urban and rural communities. At the same time, these trends are augmented by other signs of social breakdown, including increased alcoholism, violence against women and children in the family, delinquency, suicides, along with growing numbers of mental health cases and family breakups. Although much remains hidden, the crisis is real!

The victims of this deepening social crisis are many. They include women, students,

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young people, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. They involve the aboriginal peoples, new immigrants, and visible minorities. They also encompass older workers, farmers, fishers, and the working poor. Historically, the aboriginal peoples of this country have generally been the hardest hit by the realities of poverty and oppression. Today, women and children clearly find themselves among the prime victims of poverty, homelessness, and hunger. In any case, the present social crisis constitutes a series of assaults on the value, dignity, and self-worth of a growing number of people in Canada today.

In the midst of this social crisis, Canada is rapidly becoming a sharply stratified society of "winners" and "losers." On the one hand, a substantial number of working people have been subjected to permanent unemployment or shut out of employment by the new technologies. On the other hand, a more technologically secure and upwardly mobile sector of the population is permanently employed with adequate incomes. Between these two solitudes lies a large number of working people whose economic base has been severely eroded, or who live in constant fear of layoffs. This includes a growing number of workers who have no other choice but to depend on part-time, temporary, low-wage jobs for their livelihood. Caught in the downward spiral of social mobility, they constitute the "new poor" class that is rapidly emerging in Canada today.

Today, social inequalities are further dramatized by the realities of regional underdevelopment that exist across this country. The highest rates of unemployment and poverty are found today in these regions, which have traditionally served as resource hinterlands for the metropolitan industrial centers of Canada. These underdeveloped regions are Newfoundland, the Maritime Provinces, the northern parts of Ontario and large parts of Quebec, most parts of the Prairie provinces and British Columbia, and the Northern territories. The gap in the rate of unemployment between these underdeveloped regions and southern Ontario, for example, has steadily widened in recent years. In the case of Newfoundland, the gap has widened dramatically. In 1983, at the height of the economic crisis, Newfoundland's unemployment rate was 175 percent that of Ontario; by the end of 1986 it had risen to 309 percent.

Moreover, the present social crisis reveals the deep structural inequalities that exist in the distribution of wealth and power in this country. Today, the top 20 percent of income earners receive 43 percent of total personal income, while the bottom 20 percent receive less than 4 percent. These class divisions become even more evident when the net wealth of all families is considered. In terms of net wealth (total wealth minus debt), the poorest 20 percent of all Canadians have next to nothing, a mere 0.3 percent. In other words, most are in debt. The next 20 percent have only 2.4 percent of total net wealth. By contrast, the highest 20 percent possess 69 percent of Canada's total net wealth. Indeed, the top 10 percent of Canadians control over 51 percent of total wealth in this country.

As the present social crisis continues unabated, Canadians have become further polarized by class divisions, social inequalities, and regional disparities. Although existing programs have helped to eliminate some of the harsher realities of poverty, they have nevertheless not eradicated it. This compels us to raise some serious questions about some of the dominant market-oriented policies and strategies that govern our economy and society.

Market Policies

Today, Canada's social policies are increasingly being determined by market-oriented strategies. In response to the so-called "tough new world of competition," federal and provincial governments have been busy restructuring Canada's economic and social policies for a high-tech market future. The primary objective of these polices has been to stimulate the private sector as the engine of economic growth through such measures as deregulation, privatization, and deficit reductions. In order to attract profitable investment, for example, federal and provincial governments have put priority on lower social spending, lower corporate taxes, lower workers' wages, and lower environmental standards.

We believe that these economic and social-policy directions are based on a number of false

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assumptions and myths. We are told that the private sector is the main source of economic growth and prosperity; that present high unemployment rates are "normal" or "natural" for a modern industrial nation; that large government deficits are the principal cause of Canada's ongoing social and economic problems; that Canada's social programs are too generous and can no longer be afforded; that social programs would be more beneficial if they were targeted exclusively for the truly needy; that replacing all social programs with a guaranteed income would serve to cut social program costs and eliminate poverty; that privatization of social services may be a more effective means for serving basic social needs; that bilateral free trade will enhance Canada's economic and social development.

The time has come to explode these myths. Here are some counter-facts:

Private Sector: Instead of giving top priority to creating new jobs, most of Canada's large corporations have destroyed jobs by investing in labor-saving technologies, financing corporate takeovers and mergers, and "downsizing," or transferring production to other countries. The result has been jobless forms of economic growth. Although some new jobs have been created, the majority of these are part-time, low-wage forms of employment.

Natural Unemployment: There is nothing "normal," "natural," or "voluntary" about unemployment. On the contrary, large-scale unemployment (and underemployment) has become the central cause of economic and social insecurity in Canada. In economic terms alone, recent unemployment has resulted in an annual loss of some $53 billion to Canada's economy. Meanwhile, other countries have managed to maintain low rates of unemployment in spite of changing world economic conditions.

Government Deficits: As a percentage of the GNP, the current federal deficit is lower than it has been in the past. Today, the accumulated federal debt is around 35 percent of the GNP, while in 1952 it was as high as 51 percent. Current government deficits are largely the result of reduced tax revenues caused by high unemployment, increased social assistance payments to the jobless, and multibillion dollar handouts to corporations.

Social Spending: Government spending on social programs in Canada is well below spending levels in most other industrial nations. Among the OECD countries, Canada ranks thirteenth out of nineteen countries in the proportion of national income expenditures on social programs. In 1984, for example, Canada would have had to spend an additional twenty billion on social programs just to keep pace with the average in other countries. Instead, social spending in this country continues to decline relative to national wealth.

Selective Programs: By targeting people through means tests, selective programs inevitably serve to create divisions between those "who pay" and those "who receive." As a result, the poorest sectors of the population are further stigmatized, humiliated, and even harassed. Workers are pitted against the unemployed, the working poor against the welfare poor, low- and middle-income taxpayers against people on social assistance.

Privatized Services: Privatized services do not mean high quality and greater efficiency. In the operations of hospitals and nursing homes by private firms, for example, studies show that quality of service is generally sacrificed in the quest for profits. Moreover, the takeover of public services by private firms inevitably results in job losses and the erosion of working conditions, as work gets contracted out to nonunionized, low-wage enterprises.

Minimum Incomes: Minimum-income programs at less than the poverty level (as recently proposed by the Macdonald and Forget Commissions) would serve to further free both government and businesses from their responsibilities to provide full-time jobs at livable wages. Income-support schemes enable employers to avoid paying a decent wage. Under these conditions, minimum-income programs would extend poverty rather than end it. Poverty will be eliminated through full employment at decent wages coupled with improved social insurance, the extension of universal services, and adequate income support for those unable to participate in the work force.

Bilateral Free Trade: Unemployment and

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(Martha Tabor/IMPACT VISUALS)

poverty in Canada would be further aggravated by a bilateral free-trade accord with the United States. Under free trade, U.S. companies with branch plants in Canada would shift production back to their parent companies, leading to more plant shutdowns and layoffs here. Moreover, federal and provincial governments will be pressed by both U.S. and Canadian companies to reduce or eliminate those social programs said to be giving Canadian companies an "unfair competitive advantage." At the same time, Canadian employers will be pressing to lower their pay and benefit plans down to the levels of their U.S. competitors.

In the final analysis, a society and economy that are based primarily on market priorities is enormously wasteful in terms of both human and material resources. A society where over a million and a half workers are rendered unproductive by forced idleness is wasting its human resources. An economy where over a third of its productive capacity sits unused is wasting its material resources. A country where billions of dollars from peoples' savings are squandered to finance corporate takeovers, mergers, investment abroad, and unproductive speculation on the stock market is wasting a people's heritage.

Social Solidarity

Historically, social and economic policies in Canada have been developed in such a way as to divide the struggles of poor people from those of working people. The strategies of governments and corporations have often been to accentuate the differences between the poor and workers to the point of playing one group off against another. These divisive strategies, in turn, have been reinforced by ideologies that promote selfishness, greed, individualism, racism, sexism, and anti-union sentiments. In the midst of all this, many voluntary organizations and people of goodwill have been manipulated and co-opted by these divisive strategies.

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Today, the increasing trends toward market-oriented economic and social policies again threaten to divide the struggles of the poor from those of working people. We believe this is a time to stand together! It is a time for the victims of the current socioeconomic crisis to unite in a common struggle for social and economic justice in this country. For an injury to one is an injury to all!

It is clear that Canada's social-assistance programs are not adequate to measure up to the demands of the crisis. Indeed, the universality and quality of many of our social programs are being severely eroded at a time when they are most needed by a growing number of people. Action must be taken to relieve the suffering of the homeless, the hungry, and the poor. This calls for decisive measures to restructure and upgrade existing social assistance programs to ensure adequate income supports. In this regard, poor peoples' organizations across the country have an essential role to play in establishing the criteria and the goals for adequacy in our social assistance programs.

At the same time, it is also clear that this is a critical moment for making major choices about the future direction of Canada's economic and social policies. Do we want to continue the present course of building a society and economy based primarily on market-oriented values and priorities, or do we want to chart an alternative course by building a society and economy rooted in the values and priorities of social solidarity?

In a market-oriented society, human beings and social relations are largely defined in terms of the demand and supply forces of the marketplace. Economic and social policies are generally subjected to such market criteria as what is most "profitable," "productive," "competitive," and "efficient." Under these conditions, human labor, human needs, and services tend to be treated as commodities to be bought, sold, or exchanged in the marketplace. In this context, the marketplace is understood to be a system of "natural justice" wherein each person is paid according to his or her "productivity" and where accumulated wealth is expected to trickle down to the people. Yet, experience has shown the opposite result, namely, that market mechanisms often end up perpetuating poverty and social inequalities.

Indeed, we believe that social inequality is inherent in market-driven societies. For these reasons, we maintain there is another vision of society and the economy, one based on "social solidarity" rather than market values and priorities. Social solidarity has to do, first and foremost, with the realization of the common good in a given society. In a society based on solidarity, the economy is people oriented in the sense that resources, capital, labor, and markets are organized to provide for the basic life needs of the population.

The key to social solidarity and to building human community lies in our understanding of human work. The devastating social impact of unemployment is negative proof that work, and not just income, is an essential condition of well-being in society. Through the activity of human work in all its forms, people should be able to realize their human dignity and self-expression, participate in social and economic life, secure decent personal and familial incomes, and contribute to the building of a more just world.

In a market-oriented economy, however, many forms of human work in our society remain either undervalued or unrecognized. In a people-oriented economy, there are three basic dimensions with respect to human work that are essential.

First, all citizens who freely choose to work in paid productive employment have a basic right to permanent jobs with decent wages and working conditions. This fundamental right applies especially to those groups most frequently denied decent employment opportunities today (e.g., young people, persons with disabilities, people in poverty, older workers, and women who have finished raising their families). In other words, work in the form of paid employment should be the primary source of income in a people-oriented economy.

Second, all working people have a basic right to meaningful and effective participation in decision making with respect to the workplace. The fact that so much of a person's time is spent at work requires that the value and

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dignity of human work be recognized in the workplace. Moreover, the activity of work itself is integral to human life and has its own intrinsic value. If the quality of working life is to be improved, therefore, new forms of workplace democracy are imperative.

Third, all people engaged in productive but unpaid forms of work in both the home and the community have a basic right to be recognized for their contributions to the development of society. Reduced worktime would allow both men and women to share more equally in voluntary work and participate more fully in community and family life. At the same time, many current forms of voluntary work need to be converted into paid employment as a further step toward a society based on full employment.

These dimensions of human work are essential to a people-oriented economy. Even in difficult, often alienating working conditions of our present market economy, people struggle for human dignity and participation in society through their work. Indeed, human work has the power, in and of itself, to create human community and social solidarity.

Finally, the development of a stronger and more participatory democracy is an essential goal of a solidarity-oriented society. This calls for a strong and dynamic public sector that is both accessible and accountable to popular participation. Through this process, greater emphasis would be placed on stimulating community and worker participation in, and control over, both social and economic development in Canada.

Alternative Policies

There is a pressing need today to develop alternative economic and social polices based on social solidarity rather than market-oriented priorities. This means converting to a people-oriented economy and society that put top priority on serving people's basic needs, enhancing the value and dignity of human work, achieving a more equitable distribution of wealth and power among peoples and regions, and creating a more vital and participatory democracy. As a country, we have the resources, the capital, the technology, and, above all, the people and skills required to develop a new economic and social order. What is required are policies and strategies designed to stop the waste and to mobilize our human and material resources for these purposes. As an alternative platform, therefore, we propose the following socioeconomic policies and strategies based on social solidarity:

1. Full Employment: A full-employment policy, guaranteeing decent jobs for all those willing and able to work, must be established as the cornerstone of economic and social security in Canada. A full-employment policy for Canada would include the following objectives:

(a) the recognition of universal access to paid employment for all who want it as a vital element of social and economic citizenship;

(b) the adoption of legislation designed to guarantee jobs for all citizens in all regions;

(c) the development of full-employment strategies that will reduce unemployment rates to 3 percent within 5 years;

(d) the effective elimination of discriminatory barriers in employment practices; and

(e) adequate support programs designed to enable persons to take full advantage of employment opportunities (e.g., affirmative action programs, universal child care, adult literacy programs).

2. Economic Strategies: The implementation of a national economic strategy for full employment must involve the following components:

(a) concerted efforts to promote and achieve a greater degree of economic self-reliance;

(b) the development of new investment strategies including investment controls designed to redirect capital for the enhancement of manufacturing and resource sectors of the economy and regional development;

(c) the linkage of government subsidies or grants for corporations to specified job-creation standards;

(d) the expansion of public and community services as a positive means for increasing job creation and productive capacity; and

(e) the creation of democratic local structures designed to stimulate employment and regional

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investment. Financing is also required to empower municipalities to renew their infrastructures.

3. Labor Standards: A new set of labor standards designed to ensure adequate incomes, social equality, workplace democracy, and decent working conditions needs to be established and implemented. These standards for working people would include the establishment of:
(a) living wages;
(b) equal pay for work of equal value;
(c) measures to bring about greater social equality between the highest and lowest levels of salaries and wages;
(d) improved working conditions (e.g., reduced working year, familial and study leaves, improved health and safety standards); and
(e) new forms of workplace democracy.

4. Social Programs: Existing social services, insurance, and assistance programs need to be strengthened, revitalized, and expanded in order to better serve the basic needs of all citizens in our society. A revitalized system of social programs would include:
(a) the assurance of full universal access to essential social services and programs like national health care, education, family allowance, and day care services;
(b) the enhancement and extension of social-insurance programs (e.g., unemployment insurance, Canada/Quebec Pension) to ensure continuity of income in the case of contingencies;
(c) the provision of upgraded and fully indexed social assistance benefits to recognized adequacy levels for people unable to work; and
(d) improved standards of quality and public participation for the improvement of our social programs.

5. Taxation Policies: To ensure sufficient revenues for full employment and a more equitable distribution of wealth, a progressive and fair taxation system needs to be developed based on the ability to pay. This would include the following components and measures:
(a) increases in the rate of personal income taxes for the top 40 percent of income earners and the closing of tax loopholes;
(b) a progressive tax on wealth above a modest threshold (e.g., taxes on the value of property owned, dividend income, capital gains inheritances);
(c) specific measures to ensure annual reduction in wealth disparities; and
(d) a new system of taxation to ensure that corporations and financial institutions pay their fair share of taxes.

6. Public Sector: To accomplish the above objectives, the public sector itself needs to be reorganized, strengthened, and revitalized as the engine for economic and social development in Canada. This would include:
(a) new forms of public ownership, planning and decision making through new mechanisms to ensure effective public participation and accountability;
(b) the creation of democratic institutions such as worker- or community-controlled enterprises and cooperatives;
(c) greater community control over health care, education, and social services; and
(d) the mandating of crown corporations to implement a wide range of just policies on labor, economic, social, and environmental concerns.

Social Movement

Taken together, these measures constitute an alternative set of social policy directions for Canada. These proposals are not meant to be a detailed blueprint for Canada's social and economic future. What we have put forward here, instead, are some of the basic elements of an alternative vision based on principles of social solidarity rather than market priorities. Through ongoing research, analysis, and discussion by popular organizations and professional groups in communities and regions across Canada, we hope that more detailed proposals pertaining to these and related policy alternatives will be worked out. At the same time, it should be emphasized that federal, provincial (territorial), and municipal governments all have important roles to play in developing alternative strategies and programs. Moreover, businesses and other private-sector organizations have a responsibility to join in this process of building an economy that serves people.

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As a society, we have the people, the resources, and the skills required to develop an alternative economic and social future. What is required is the social imagination, moral courage, and political will to chart a new course. To move in this direction, however, it is essential that people coalesce around a common social and economic vision. The emerging public debate over Canada's social policy future provides an occasion to begin this coalition-building process.

The signs of the times give us some cause for hope. Across this country today, there is a growing commitment by popular groups—labor unions, women's organizations, welfare-rights groups, church organizations, aboriginal associations, handicapped groups, racial-minority associations, co-op groups, students' associations, environmental groups, and a variety of other community organizations—to mobilize against any further assaults on Canada's social programs by market-oriented strategies and to struggle for alternative policies based on social solidarity.

Over the past two years, we have witnessed some dramatic illustrations of this commitment to mobilize popular coalitions around social policy issues. These include the public campaigns against extra billing for Medicare, against the de-indexation of old-age pensions, and against the de-indexation of family allowances. At the same time, popular coalitions for social solidarity have been organized in several provinces to address critical social and economic policy issues affecting the victims of crisis in their region.

We intend to take this declaration and agenda to a host of popular organizations in communities and regions all across Canada. We hope to encourage thousands of peoples' organizations to discuss, debate, and endorse the basic orientation of the declaration. At the same time, we hope that this declaration will be used as a *framework* for evaluating provincial polices and stimulating thought about policy alternatives. Through this process, we expect that a variety of grass-roots initiatives for alternative policies will emerge that will, in turn, add further insights and options to the proposals advanced in this declaration.

What kind of society do we want to build in this country?

This is the question that must be faced by all residents of Canada today. Do we want to continue on the present course of building a society based primarily on market-oriented values and priorities? Or do we want to chart an alternative course by building a society rooted in the values and priorities of social solidarity?

As members of popular-sector groups across Canada, we have declared our commitment and determination to struggle for social and economic policies based on social solidarity.

We believe that this is a time to stand together!

We now call upon all people who share this social vision to join with us in building a popular movement to transform the dominant socioeconomic policies of this country. Together, we can reverse the present backward move toward an inequitable and divided society. Together, we can build a more human society based on the principle of social solidarity. □

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Erazim Kohák

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BLUES

Growth, Ecology, & "The American Dream"

To speak the truth: that is the most urgent item on the next president's agenda. We have been lied to, systematically and patronizingly, ever since the Gulf of Tonkin incident, deceived, manipulated, flattered and lulled by illusions. Call it *glasnost*, or truth in politicking: one way or another, the great challenge of the next century will be to reintroduce reality into our political rhetoric.

That is a weighty agenda: a revision of the great illusion into which the American dream has degenerated. Our society has for a century been characterized by the belief that ever-rising individual consumption sustained by an open-ended economic expansion is both the meaning of individual existence and a sufficient goal of public policy. This faith has become so intertwined with our conception of modernity that we cannot face the prospect of giving it up: We would sooner believe lies and incur massive debts, as the Reagan presidency demonstrates.

Reality, though, is closing in. Perhaps the first symptom of trouble in dreamland has been the declining marginal utility of individual affluence. The quest for a personal computer in every garage and a Jacuzzi in every pot may be absorbing but is not satisfying. The symptoms of personal disintegration among the affluent confirm that the quest for ever-greater affluence ceases to provide an adequate source of meaning in life once some fairly basic minimal needs have been met. The neoconservative prescription for restoring glamour to the quest for affluence rests on the improbable assumption that the person bored with three hundred thousand dollars will become magically motivated by the prospect of a million. Thus far, acting on that assumption has produced only some of the most revolting displays of conspicuous consumption since Veblen's time.

By contrast, the unspoken assumption that American liberals and socialists share has been that the dream of growth can be salvaged by shifting its benefits from the affluent to the underprivileged. Thus the American dream of wealth and expansion might be refurbished by stressing the possibilities of social justice, perhaps by making economic expansion collective rather than corporate and extending its benefits to those hitherto excluded.

Such a shift is surely intrinsically desirable. Even a massive redistribution of wealth, however, cannot restore long-range viability to the vision of unending affluence and expansion. I am not predicting a catastrophic demise of humankind upon the exhaustion of a particular resource, what we might call a "negative utopia." Negative utopias, such as the coal utopias of the late nineteenth century or the food utopias of the 1960s, effectively obscured the problem as a whole by focusing on one particular aspect. So the negative utopians of the 1960s, predicting global starvation as the needs of growing populations exceeded the maximum yields then possible, appeared discredited as the green revolution drastically increased agricultural productivity. The negative utopians warned, falsely as it turned out, that technology has only a limited

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ability to draw on nature's resources. Today, it has become obvious that while the resources of technology and its ability to exploit nature may be infinite, the resources of living nature are painfully finite.

Humans have destroyed whole ecosystems before. Yet in our century we went on believing that, whatever damage we might do, once we won our victories, nature would clean up after us and restore the devastated earth.

The evidence is now overwhelming that nature is no longer restoring itself. The global forest cover is vanishing at a terrifying rate. Nor is that simply a matter of tropical rain forests cleared to provide a marginal survival for surplus populations. Some three quarters of Europe's forests are dying as well, choked by automobile exhausts and industrial pollution. Entire species are becoming extinct, and in spite of some successes, our conservation efforts are only slowing the process. Nor is the damaged ozone layer restoring itself. Living nature can simply no longer compensate for our irresponsibility. Today, nature depends on us for its survival just as we depend on it. Our technological possibilities are potentially unlimited. It is up to us to set our limits, based on the limits of nature's tolerance.

All that is true today of living nature is no less true of human nature, the other constant on which we have depended to compensate for our greed and folly. Throughout their millennia on earth, humans have shared a fundamental human situation, as finite, free, and social, in the context of a constant living nature, and have responded to it in a limited number of predictable ways. The question has always been in principle a closed one, asking about the optimal accommodation between two relative constants, the reality of living nature and the needs of human nature.

In retrospect, it is nothing short of staggering to note the extent to which social practice relied on the constancy of human nature and its capacity for regeneration and self-regulation. Just as we have assumed that living nature will regenerate itself after our orgies of destruction, we have taken it no less for granted that human nature would restore itself, no matter to what horrors and destruction it might have been subjected. We have always assumed that after the devastation of war or revolution life would simply "return to normal."

In fact, had we but stopped to consider it, we could have found empirical evidence that the self-regenerating capacity of human nature, like that of living nature, has its limits.

It is possible that our shared humanity, while real enough, may well have been relatively constant and universal in great part because of the universality and constancy of the human condition in the context of living nature. The direct dependence on the soil and on the cycle of the seasons, enforced by limited possibilities and well-defined demands, were not significantly different for the Roman peasant of whom Virgil wrote and the eighteenth-century farmer. When Richard Hooker wrote of that which "Nature herself hath taught," he was speaking quite literally. Though few ever admitted it, warriors and revolutionaries alike have always relied on the constancy of human nature to make sure that, win or lose, there would still be a future on the day after the cataclysm.

It was Marx who first explicitly recognized that the constancy of human nature is contingent on the constancy of the human condition and was willing to recognize the consequence: that the industrial revolution, radically separating the lives of humans from the life of living nature, changed "human nature" as well. Marx is easy to criticize for treating a far more transient mode of being human, that of the massed unskilled laborer of the early smokestack industries, as the definitive human condition. It was that identification that made the "ideology of the industrial proletariat" as transient as the "industrial proletariat" itself, relevant in countries just entering upon the smokestack stage, embarrassing in countries trying to pass beyond it. That does not change the value of the basic insight.

What we need now is a radically new formulation of the American dream, based on that insight. The new human condition—that is, the alienation from nature—does not of itself dictate a specific human response. We

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can, as we have so far done, treat the new freedom as a blanket excuse for irresponsibility. Or we can accept it as a challenge for assuming responsibility for what we have long taken for granted.

The first response is essentially Nietzschean, articulated by Dostoevski's Ivan Karamazov: If God is dead, everything is permitted. Consequences no longer matter. If neither living nature nor human nature teach a moral norm, then there simply is no norm, only the interests and desires of individuals. On that nihilistic premise, the bowdlerized version of the American dream—the relentless pursuit of ever greater material affluence, fueled by open-ended economic expansion, whatever the cost—may well appear legitimate, as long as it corresponds to individual desires—and the popular approval of Mr. Reagan's rhetoric of irresponsible affluence strongly suggests that it might.

Fortunately, a second response is possible. The American dream has always had a poetic side as well, one that spoke of a land "beautiful for spacious skies," of "liberty and justice for all." It was Jefferson who substituted the pursuit of *happiness* for Locke's phrase, the pursuit of *property*. Deep down, Americans bear the traces of a different vision, based on generosity rather than greed. This is the land of Thoreau, Lincoln, Whitman, not only the land of the robber barons, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan.

That is what suggests the possibility of a second response: that though the moral order of nature and of our humanity may no longer be a fact, it has lost none of its validity as an ideal and a responsibility. We ourselves might—such is the nature of human freedom—accept responsibility for the moral order of nature and for the moral order of the human community within it.

A commitment to self-restraint and gratitude is difficult to present to a society marked by flagrant inequality. For a century or more, we have countered the fact of inequality with the promise of infinite expansion that would, some day, include the deprived within the range of affluence, holding out a pie-in-the-future as a substitute for present solutions. We would have to give that up and replace it with a serious commitment to social justice now.

Such a new American dream can offer us a future; the old dream, reduced to greed, cannot. What is required is a massive shift in priorities from the maximization of individual consumption to the pursuit of the common good. Contrary to popular wisdom, that is not so much a matter of accepting a lower standard of living as of redefining what constitutes a high one. A sustained barrage of advertising seeks daily to convince us that a "higher standard of living" means, quite crudely, being able to buy more things more expensively.

We allow our government to contribute to it by having census takers ask whether a family has a washer, a dryer, and a freezer rather than whether it has a good school, whether its children can walk to it safely or ride a clean, convenient bus, whether there is a park in the neighborhood, and a theater to open their horizons.

Yet, surely a person is enjoying a higher living standard when he or she has access to a clean, safe, and efficient public transport system, even though he or she may not be able to afford a status-priced automobile. Again, a person is surely enjoying a far higher living standard when he or she can walk freely on safe, clean streets than if he or she can afford a more expensive security system and a bodyguard. Life is surely better in a community of well-educated and financially secure fellow humans than alone in a fortress, no matter how luxurious, barricaded against a desperate, depraved mass. And, most basically, the quality of life is surely far higher, living amid a healthy, self-renewing living nature we can bequeath to our children than amid countless gew-gaws in an industrial wasteland.

In a democracy, a reordering of unquestioned values is extremely difficult. It is easy enough to be both democratic and responsible as long as the common good coincides with the sum of individual desires. It is far more difficult when the common weal diverges significantly from such perceived desires. The perceived individual demand, conditioned by mass media, is only for "More!" while the urgent need is for restraint and redirection of our resources. Recognizing the limits of expansion—the meta-

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phoric "closing of the frontier"—has always represented a crisis for democracy.

Would it take an autocrat to save both nature and civilization from our runaway greed? We shall no doubt be hearing that argument frequently in future years, but the question needs to be reversed. Is there any reason to suppose that an autocrat could accomplish what democracy cannot do? Throughout history, neither traditional elites nor self-proclaimed vanguards have shown themselves immune to the same short-sighted greed that they claimed to overrule by seizing power. The only thing that despotism, no matter how enlightened, has ever achieved has been to deprive its subjects of the ability to choose wisely and to act responsibly, reducing them to the lowest common denominator of passivity.

The dictum of Karl Kautsky still holds firm: When a social ideal cannot be achieved democratically, it cannot be achieved at all. Force can fashion only the façade, and never the substance, of reform. The art of leadership is so to guide the common will as to have it recognize the common weal as its own. Given America's present mood, that task might well appear impossible. Perhaps at no time in American history have ideas of service, self-restraint, and responsibility been held in such low esteem. Even if we were to tax advertising and use the proceeds to buy equal time for the message of the common weal—surely a highly desirable practice—we could compete poorly with the peer pressures of a consumer society.

Against such a background, it might well seem utterly unrealistic to expect any politician to appeal to the electorate's generous impulses, asking it to defer individual gratification for the sake of a higher common aim. A government that wins easy popularity by relying on massive borrowing to avoid taxation can hardly ask citizens to restrain their own profligate habits. The hope for a voluntary shift of priorities might appear vain.

And yet, repeatedly in human history, people have responded far more wholeheartedly to a clear call for sacrifice than to vague placebos of prosperity. The British voters shuffled along with Neville Chamberlain's willingness to trade self-respect for an ephemeral promise of "peace in our time," but they responded powerfully to Churchill's sober call for "blood, toil, tears, and sweat." No president since has so electrified his compatriots as John Kennedy—"Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." The image of humans as consumers whose only motivation is self-indulgence may appear superficially accurate amid the monotony of everydayness, yet the times that people remember as their finest hours are invariably those when they responded to a challenge to self-transcendence.

To be sure, the examples we have cited came from times of clearly recognized need. Today, America is at peace, enjoying unprecedented prosperity. Today, the situation is simply different. . . . Or is it?

Only a short way beneath the façade, the facts tell a different story, one of a succession of administrations content to substitute placebos for policy that have left America looking like an immensely affluent Third World country. Alone among the world's developed nations, the United States today is without a comprehensive health system, without an adequate old-age pension scheme, without a balanced system of public transportation, without concern for decent and affordable housing, without a public education policy. Our country is marked by immense individual affluence and shocking public irresponsibility, a rapidly widening gap between the rich and the poor, a burgeoning military establishment, the lowest level of taxation in the West, and runaway debt, both public and private.

America's prosperity, much like that of Poland in the 1970s, is financed by massive borrowing, both public and private. As of last count, payments on private debts swallowed up 84 percent of our disposable income. As to public indebtedness, in the second quarter of 1987 Japan, one of our major creditors, refused to underwrite yet another ten billion in credits that the U.S. government sought from it.

Nor has borrowing been of the overt, financial variety only. The progressive devastation of our natural environment and the erosion of civilization's infrastructure represent a far more vicious form of borrowing, undermining

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our future. The situation may be less dramatic, but it is hardly less critical.

As critical, though, it becomes solvable as well. The very Americans who dismiss themselves as greedily egotistic have responded and are responding altruistically whenever challenged to do so by a clearly perceived need. Only a decade ago, they responded positively to the recognition that "small is beautiful." It took all the exertions of Reaganite rhetoric to blunt that perception. Still, the ecological movement is stronger than ever, for there the need is obvious. Altogether, there is significant evidence that the Americans are still willing and able to respond in farsighted, altruistic ways when they recognize a clear need.

And with that we have come full circle. The most urgent task of our next president will be to speak the truth, to restore reality to presidential rhetoric. We need a president who would speak the truth about the difference between what we are and what we could be. We need a president who would combine a grandeur of vision with a stark honesty about reality—and the confidence in America's ability to transcend its present reality in the pursuit of an ideal.

Certainly, we also need a great deal more—a public-health plan, an adequate pension system, an educational system capable of assuring a future, adequate housing capable of revitalizing our cities, vigorous action to include in the common weal all hitherto excluded, an imaginative policy in pursuit of world peace, and a great deal more that the Congress can legislate.

From our president, though, we, the American people, need truth and vision. Given those, we can do the rest. □

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John B. Judis

CONSERVATIVES STUMBLE INTO THE FUTURE

What Can They Expect After Reagan's Gone?

Some conservatives believe that when Ronald Reagan leaves office he will take the conservative movement with him into retirement. Kevin Phillips, author of *Post-Conservative America,* writes, "The tides that began launching the conservative era twenty years ago are old and beginning to ebb." New Right activist Paul Weyrich complains that "the 'Reagan Revolution' turned out to be not a revolution at all, but rather a temporary bloodless coup." But others believe that the Reagan years laid the foundation for a conservative America. A future historian, writes Irving Kristol, could define the Reagan years "as the first critical stage in the evolution of a conservative majority in American politics."

Both sides could be right. If one looks at conservatism as a rising movement that formed in the mid-1950s, won the 1964 Republican nomination for Senator Barry Goldwater, and then the presidency for Reagan in 1980, its moment may have passed. In 1988, Republican conservatism is very much like the Democratic liberalism of the late 1940s. It has lost its political majority. Its immediate legislative agenda has been exhausted. Its older leadership is tired. But like the liberalism of the 1940s, American conservatism has expended neither its internal resources nor its ability to influence American politics.

Conservative Republicans will undoubtedly suffer from divisions in their ranks, but short of being identified with a losing war or economic depression, they may remain within striking distance of national and state majorities. And conservative opposition to "big government," Third World nationalism, and affirmative action for minorities will continue to resonate among a significant minority of voters.

Building Cadre

The existence of an infrastructure is the key to conservatives' survival. This infrastructure consists of institutions and trained individuals—what the conservatives, following the Leninist left, call "cadres."

In 1964, when Goldwater unexpectedly won the Republican presidential nomination, the conservative movement had a cause and about thirty thousand grass-roots activists, but few, if any, political consultants, policy experts, or political scientists. The only conservative organizations were the Young Americans for Freedom and the disreputable John Birch Society. Goldwater had few conservatives experienced at practical politics to run his campaign. Had he miraculously won the presidency, he would not have been able to fill cabinet or major staff posts with conservatives.

By 1968, the situation had not changed. When Anthony Dolan, a Yale undergraduate

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and future Reagan speech writer, met William F. Buckley, Jr. at the Republican convention in Miami, Dolan predicted that Reagan would win the nomination and lead a Roosevelt-like political revolution in the country. But Buckley, aware of the conservatives' lack of trained leaders, replied, "Where are the assistant professors?"

Over the last two decades, conservatives have developed lobbying groups, think tanks, and political action organizations. With Reagan in office, conservatives have been able to get on-the-job training in running the country. As a result, a new generation of conservative leaders has emerged, capable of filling high posts in a future administration.

William Bennett, Reagan's secretary of education, is a case in point. In 1978, he was an assistant to Boston University President John Silber and, under Silber's influence, was transformed from an antiwar liberal into a conservative Democrat. He also met neoconservative godfather Irving Kristol and Kristol's wife, the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb. In 1978, on Himmelfarb's recommendation, Bennett was appointed assistant director of the National Humanities Center in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. When the director was murdered in 1979, Bennett replaced him. Then, in 1981, the neoconservatives waged a successful and acrimonious campaign to win Bennett's appointment as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 1985, Bennett succeeded Terrell Bell as secretary of education. Bennett not only became one of the administration's principal spokesmen, but brought into the department many young conservatives, including Kristol's son William.

Gary Bauer, Reagan's domestic policy chief in his second term, enjoyed an even more meteoric rise. In 1980, he was a lobbyist for Direct Marketing Associates. In the early 1970s, he was a low-level staffer on the Republican National Committee while attending Georgetown Law School. He joined the Reagan campaign in summer 1980 and after the election was hired in the Office of Policy Development, where he came to the attention of Attorney General Edwin Meese III. In 1982, Bauer moved to the Department of Education as an assistant secretary. By 1985, he had become Bennett's chief deputy. In 1987, at Meese's urging, he returned to the White House to head the Office of Policy Development. At this post, he advanced the conservative agenda, superintending the administration's stand on abortion, AIDS, and welfare. And he brought in as many young conservatives as he could.

The conservative think tanks were crucial in extending the influence of such cadres. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI), the Hoover Institution, and the Heritage Foundation helped fill many of the administration's mid-level positions and federal judiciary vacancies. AEI, which contributed such luminaries as former U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, former White House Director of Communications David Gergen, and World Bank President Barber Conable, was a shoestring operation in 1964, when it served as Goldwater's tiny brain trust. By the early 1980s, its budget was over $10 million. Heritage, begun in 1973 with a $250,000 grant from right-wing brewer Joseph Coors, moved in 1983 from a set of modest row houses to an $11-million edifice overlooking Capitol Hill. Heritage's staff of more than a hundred published four or five position papers every week. Its computerized personnel office, headed by Louis Cordia, former deputy director of the Environmental Protection Agency, funneled conservative professionals into government jobs.

With the think tanks' help, the Reagan administration reshaped the federal judiciary into an outpost of conservatism that will survive immediate changes in government. Reagan will have appointed about half the country's 573 federal district judges and 156 appeals court judges and filled at least three of nine Supreme Court seats. The path from think tanks to the bench was well worn. For instance, in 1977, Antonin Scalia and Robert Bork, both nominated by Reagan to the Court of Appeals and then the Supreme Court, and Laurence Silberman, whom Reagan appointed to the Court of Appeals, were AEI fellows—members of a regular discussion group with Kirkpatrick, Kristol, and James Miller, who later became director of the Office of Management and Budget.

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(Les Stone/IMPACT VISUALS)

Another judge, Danny Boggs, a former Young Republican and a disciple of Milton Friedman, was recruited by the Heritage Foundation to help write its massive policy agenda for the incoming Reagan administration, *Mandate for Change*. Heritage then championed his ascent through the federal government, from White House assistant to deputy secretary of energy, and then to the Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

AEI, Heritage, and Hoover are the best known conservative institutions, but dozens of others have sprung up over the last decade, from the Mountain States Legal Foundation, which contributed James Watt and Ann Gorsuch to the Interior Department, to the Federalist Society, which is incubating a generation of cadres for combat in the legal profession.

Strength in the Party

In the 1940s and 1950s, eastern bankers and corporate executives dominated Republican presidential politics, while the midwestern "Old Guard," anti–New Deal and isolationist, reigned supreme in Congress. In 1960, Richard Nixon had to demonstrate his loyalty to the party's eastern wing by pledging to back New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller's platform planks. But in 1964, a coalition of new conservatives from the South and the West and "Old Guard" midwestern Republicans won the nomination for Goldwater. Reagan's nomination in 1980—along with conservative Al d'Amato's defeat of incumbent Jacob Javits in the New York Senate primary—signaled the final defeat of the liberal eastern establishment of John Hay Whitney, John Lindsay, and Nelson Rockefeller.

There was friction between the Old Guard Republicans and conservatives like Senator Jesse Helms, but the two groups worked together to pass most of Reagan's economic program. Lacking experienced officials, conservatives turned to the Old Guard for practical leadership in the Senate and on Republican

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national committees, but the Old Guard increasingly deferred to the conservatives ideologically, most obviously in the presidential primaries.

In 1980, the presidential field contained only two acknowledged conservatives, Reagan and Illinois Congressman Phil Crane. George Bush, John Anderson, and Robert Dole positioned themselves in the Republican center, and former Democrat John Connally tried to carve out a niche of his own. By 1988, all the major GOP candidates tried to appeal to the conservative wing.

The conservative influence over Republican politics was exercised through a network of national and state political action committees and lobbies that grew during the Reagan years. Many of these groups, like Howard Phillips's Conservative Caucus and Helms's Congressional Club, dated from the late 1970s, but others, like Citizens for America, an ambitious grass-roots lobby headquartered in the Heritage Foundation, and the Young Conservative Alliance, which tried to rescue a Soviet defector on the Mississippi river, originated during the Reagan years. These groups howled every time a conservative appeared to be threatened. When the administration gave half-hearted support to the Central American peace plan proposed by Nobel Prize winner Oscar Arias, president of Costa Rica, in 1987, conservatives circulated buttons: "Support the Contras, Impeach Reagan."

The growth of the religious right reinforced conservative dominance in the Republican party. Before the 1980 election, the religious right had been organized by the Reverend Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, by Ed McAteer's Religious Roundtable, and by conservative leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention, the rapidly growing Assemblies of God churches, and other evangelical groups. By 1986, the strength of the religious right was apparent in state and local elections and in Republican right factional fights. In Indiana in 1986, two religious right candidates won congressional primaries against party moderates. In the 1986 Oregon Senate primary, fundamentalist minister Joe Lutz almost upset powerful incumbent Robert Packwood—in spite of being outspent fifty to one. Texas, Iowa, Minnesota, and Michigan experienced the growing influence of Bible conservatives. In the 1988 primaries, the Reverend Pat Robertson's campaign was based on appeals to evangelicals.

The religious right built public support for conservative politics in the South as it tried to take over not only the Republican party but also church organizations. In June 1986, the Reverend Adrian Rogers, an ally of Robertson's, became president of the 14.5 million member Southern Baptist convention—part of the highly organized campaign to take over that religious denomination. The success of the right was evident in a political shift among white southern evangelicals. According to a survey of Southern Baptist ministers, party identification went from 41 percent Democratic and 29 percent Republican in 1981 to 66 percent Republican and 26 percent Democratic by 1984. According to another survey, 56 percent of white southern evangelicals voted Democratic in 1976 and 81 percent voted Republican in 1984.

Riding the wave, conservatives established a formidable political apparatus capable of winning elections and pressuring legislators throughout the country. Hundreds of young conservatives set up shop in Washington as political consultants, pollsters, and media specialists. For instance, Charles Black, Paul Manafort, and Roger Stone, who worked for the Reagan campaigns in 1980 and 1984, set up a consulting and lobbying firm. For sizable fees, the firm advised both international clients, like Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in Angola, and domestic political candidates. While one associate of the firm advised the presidential campaign of George Bush, another advised that of Jack Kemp.

Solidifying the Majority

In his path-breaking 1969 study, *The Emerging Republican Majority,* Kevin Phillips argued that the combined votes in 1968 of Richard Nixon and George Wallace represented a new Republican majority of economic conservatives, with northern ethnic and southern white voters united in resentment against civil rights, the welfare state, and liberal cultural assaults

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upon flag and family. Reagan's victory in 1980 seemed to confirm this theory.

The three issues that triggered the development of a conservative movement in the 1950s and 1960s were opposition to federally imposed racial integration, opposition to the welfare state, and support for the "rollback" (not merely the "containment") of Soviet communism. In the movement's early years, conservative politicians had difficulty winning elections because they expressed views in an extreme manner—for instance, Goldwater's attacks against Social Security during his 1964 presidential campaign—or because the public still supported the programs conservatives opposed. As political scientists Lloyd A. Free and Hadley Cantril showed in their 1967 study, *The Political Beliefs of Americans,* Americans were resolutely "conservative" in overall ideology—"they continue to accept the traditional ideology which advocates the curbing of Governmental operations"—while increasingly liberal in judging the worth of programs "at the practical level of Governmental operations."

But in the 1970s, the public became increasingly willing to try conservative approaches, and conservative politicians became increasingly discriminating in the way they advanced their own program, emphasizing what was popular and understating what was unpopular. Continuing inflation and unemployment eroded popular support for government intervention in the economy and contributed to support for conservative attacks against government regulation, spending, and taxes. The racial backlash also inflamed antiwelfare sentiments.

By the late 1970s, popular disquiet about America's place in the world had been fed by the defeat in Vietnam, the energy crisis, the growing trade imbalance with Japan and West Germany, and the perception, carefully nurtured by Cold War lobbies, of Soviet military superiority. Many voters blamed the party in power, the Democrats. By the end of the Carter administration, two decades of civil rights struggle had also fragmented the Democratic coalition. Fueled by school busing and affirmative action hiring, opposition to racial integration had spread north. Conservatives who opposed the Supreme Court's integration decisions and the civil rights acts—and now opposed affirmative action and busing—were able to draw upon the racial backlash that George Wallace had exploited in his 1964 and 1968 presidential campaigns.

Over Reagan's two terms, however, popular support for conservative approaches to the economy and foreign policy diminished. With inflation under control as a result of the 1982-83 recession, popular distrust of government and government programs noticeably decreased. According to a 1987 *Washington Post*/Associated Press poll, more Americans favored an increase rather than a decrease in food stamps and unemployment insurance. But there was still considerable support for conservative economic approaches. For instance, the same poll found that 49 percent of Americans still believed that "federal government is trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals and private business." By shifting income distribution toward the upper end, the Reagan administration had also created a vested interest in retaining conservative approaches.

Support for conservative foreign policy also diminished. According to a 1981 *Washington Post*/AP poll, 72 percent of Americans favored an increase in military spending; by 1987, only 31 percent favored an increase. With the accession to power in 1985 of Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev, popular support for a posture of unremitting hostility toward the Soviet Union also declined. But Americans continued to be anxious about their place in the world. In a 1987 study of American attitudes toward military spending, pollster Stanley Greenberg found, above all, "doubts that America was still 'number one' or that she was a 'first rate power.' "

In his *A Study of History,* Arnold Toynbee describes a political peculiarity of declining empires that he calls the "idolization of institutions." When a nation begins to fall from the pinnacle of world power, its people seek to restore the conditions that had made possible its rise. Thus, the British in the 1920s restored the Gold Standard even though it undermined British industry and contributed to the outbreak of world depression. As the United States began to lose its preeminence, Americans turned to

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the economic policies of the 1920s and the foreign and military policies of the 1940s even though, it could be argued, these approaches accelerate American decline. The conservatism of the 1980s was, above all, based upon this appeal to imperial nostalgia. And this accounts for the depth of its popular appeal.

In an important respect, the basis for conservative support may have widened during the Reagan years. The racial antagonisms that underlay the Reagan landslide in 1980 have, if anything, been exacerbated. The election of black mayors in major northern cities like Chicago and Philadelphia speeded the emigration of middle-class whites from the cities and toward the Republican party. White political leaders like Chicago's Edward Vrdolyak and Philadelphia's Frank Rizzo defected to the GOP. In 1984, Jesse Jackson's influence within the Democratic party scared many southern whites into voting for Reagan.

In a study prepared for the Michigan House Democratic Campaign Committee in 1985, Stanley Greenberg concluded that Democratic defectors shared "a profound distaste for blacks, a sentiment that pervades almost everything they think about government and politics." Remarking upon the support for Reagan among thirty- to forty-five-year-old union men, Greenberg wrote that "the depth of racial sentiment and regard for Reagan's leadership and strength" outweighed their opposition to a "whole range of specific Reagan programs." These voters, Greenberg notes, will support conservative candidates regardless of whether they agree with them on specific economic proposals.

In Crisis Nonetheless

In spite of their gains, however, conservatives found themselves at the end of Reagan's second term in the throes of a political identity crisis similar to that which afflicted them after major setbacks in 1964 and 1974. The cause for this identity crisis was partly the boom-bust cycle that affects all political movements.

Having emerged in the mid-1950s with a politics of antistatism and militant anticommunism, conservatives were forced to redefine their program and strategy after Goldwater's defeat in November 1964 and after Nixon's resignation in August 1974. After Goldwater, conservatives adopted a more pragmatic—even opportunistic—public stance. They eschewed open opposition to Social Security and focused on issues like crime and welfare fraud, which were attracting new voters to conservative candidates. Reagan's 1966 California campaign—managed by Nelson Rockefeller's former campaign consultant, Stuart Spencer—was the paradigm.

After Nixon's resignation, a group of activists who eventually came to be called the "New Right" made an explicit push for George Wallace's segregationist constituency and for small-town Protestants offended by the new sexual morality of the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, former leftists, who came to be called "neoconservatives," sought successfully to reconcile right-wing politicians to a minimal definition of the welfare state. In the 1978 and 1980 elections, these approaches brought new voters into the conservative camp and helped revive conservative fortunes.

But what worked in 1980 won't necessarily work in 1988 and 1990. Both Reagan's economic policy and his foreign policy—dubbed by neoconservative columnist Charles Krauthammer the "Reagan Doctrine"—have exhausted their political usefulness. In the wake of the 1988 election, conservatives will have to redefine their approach no matter who wins the presidency.

Reagan's economic policy, or Reaganomics, evolved out of the political failure of the old conservative economics. In the 1976 New Hampshire Republican primary battle between Ronald Reagan and incumbent President Gerald Ford, Reagan was defeated largely because he introduced a vague and threatening plan for transferring $90 billion in federal programs to the states. That plan was traditional conservative economics. It drew an enthusiastic response from conservative activists, but the Ford campaign used it to scare voters into believing that vital government services, including Social Security, would be cut under Reagan. Although Reagan tried to deny that

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Social Security would be affected, the damage was already done; he lost New Hampshire.

In 1980, Reagan adopted a new approach to economics. In the mid-1970s, *Wall Street Journal* editorialist Jude Wanniski, aided by Kristol and maverick economists Arthur Laffer and Robert Mundell, promoted a new theory that appeared to resolve the contradiction between conservative doctrine and popular support. According to the theory, worldwide inflation and unemployment could be attacked by a simultaneous program of regressive tax cuts and reduction in money-supply growth. Wanniski and the supply-siders argued that tax rates could be cut across the board without reducing revenues. Thus, it was possible to cut taxes—a long-held conservative goal—without violating conservative strictures against budget deficits *and* without requiring unpopular cuts in social spending. Supply-side economics appeared to have squared the political circle.

Prodded by Representative Jack Kemp, Reagan in 1980 made supply-side economics a central plank of his campaign. One Reagan campaign commercial promised that "if we cut tax rates deeply and permanently, we'll be removing many of the barriers that hold everyone back. Those who have the least will gain the most." When Reagan assumed office, he made Wanniski's original program of tax cuts and reduced money-supply growth the centerpiece of his economic program. The trouble was that reducing the money supply through raising interest rates canceled out whatever stimulative effects the cut had on the economy. By 1982, the United States had plunged into the worst recession since the 1930s. For the first time, the federal budget deficit rose above $100 billion. By 1983, it reached $200 billion.

After the economy began to recover, supply-side advocates claimed that the tax cuts had worked all along. It is indeed true that the cuts, combined with military spending, probably did stimulate the economy in 1983 and 1984—in time for Reagan's reelection campaign. But the tax cuts also helped create record deficits and laid the groundwork for a series of tax increases (or "revenue enhancements," as Reagan's White House staff euphemistically labeled them) that eventually canceled out much of the original tax cut. The administration turned to the traditional conservative program of cutting spending to reduce the deficit. But by 1983, there was little more that it could cut without sparking a political revolt in Congress; its attempts to reduce Social Security spending had already contributed to Republican defeats in the 1982 election.

At the beginning of Reagan's second term, he did not advance a coherent conservative economic program. Rather, the administration backed a tax-simplification measure originally devised by Democratic Senator Bill Bradley and Representative Richard Gephardt. Alerted by opinion polls favoring certain kinds of government spending, the administration proposed a catastrophic health plan that closely resembled a plan introduced by the Carter administration. The administration even repudiated in practice its own free trade stance by backing sanctions against Japanese firms accused of unfair trade practices. Reaganomics became a dim memory.

The October 19, 1987 stock market crash exposed the superficiality of the Reagan recovery. Tax cuts and deregulation had fueled a speculative boom in stocks and real estate without stemming the erosion of the country's industrial base, evidenced by a rising trade deficit in manufactured goods. As pressure mounted for action, the administration found itself hedged in by the budget deficits it had created. Foreign bankers and many economists blamed the deficit for high interest rates and for undermining confidence in the stock market. They urged the administration, unwilling to reduce military spending or cut entitlement programs, to cut the deficit with increased taxes. But many conservatives advocated cutting taxes and reducing stock-market regulation to encourage stock investment and prevent a recession. Kemp advocated further reducing capital gains taxes. The *National Review* even advocated reducing the margin costs for stock purchases from 50 to 25 percent—a measure that seemed to invite further debt and speculation.

The prevailing confusion was epitomized by a debate that appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* between two founders of supply-side economics—economic consultant Arthur Laf-

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fer, inventor of the Laffer curve, and Paul Craig Roberts, a former Treasury Department official. Once of a single mind, they now disagreed about why the crash had occurred and what to do about it. Laffer argued that the Federal Reserve's "recent acceleration" of the money supply was the cause. Roberts contended that it was the Federal Reserve's slowing of money supply. Laffer called for the Fed to "slow the growth" of the money supply, while Roberts called for the Fed to accelerate it.

Since the mid-1950s, conservatives had faced similar difficulties reconciling their foreign policy convictions with popular attitudes. Although their militant anticommunism appealed to both patriotism and fear of Soviet attack, it also raised unwelcome anxieties about United States entanglement in foreign wars, or even nuclear war. In 1964, Lyndon Johnson's successful campaign against Barry Goldwater was epitomized by a television ad featuring a little girl whose picture faded into an H-bomb mushroom cloud. In 1980, even as Reagan was exploiting a decade of popular resentments against the United States being pushed around in the world and carefully nurtured fears that the United States was militarily falling behind the Soviet Union, he had to calm the worry that he might plunge the country into war.

Once in office, Reagan pursued a mammoth military buildup. In undertaking an aggressive foreign policy, however, he found himself torn between conservative doctrine and the realities of both domestic politics and international power. The administration could not stop the Polish military, acting under pressure from the Soviet Union, from suppressing the Solidarity movement. Its thwarting of arms control sparked a nuclear freeze movement. Its effort to create a guerrilla army to fight the Sandinistas in Nicaragua aroused popular fears of a Central American Vietnam and led to a congressional cutoff of *contra* aid funds.

Public opinion studies during Reagan's two terms revealed that the public feared the Soviet Union but was unwilling to commit tax dollars to foreign wars whose outcome was uncertain. Popular attitudes reflected the persistence of isolationism rather than sympathy for the Sandinistas or dislike of the *contras*. The public tolerated the use of military force only when the action was quick and decisive, as during the administration's invasion of Grenada and the air strike against Libya.

Some conservatives were almost as critical of the administration's foreign policy as liberals. Reviewing Reagan's first term in *Foreign Affairs,* Norman Podhoretz, editor of the neoconservative *Commentary* magazine, accused the administration of practicing "rollover" rather than "rollback" with respect to the Soviet Union. The Heritage Foundation held a symposium in its journal *Policy Review* urging the administration to move "behind containment." But in its second term, the administration, faced with conflicting priorities and new challenges, fell apart completely.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the behavior of the Soviet Union in Africa, Afghanistan, and Poland and bellicose statements by the Soviet military lent a certain credibility to the conservatives' militant anticommunism. But when Gorbachev assumed power in 1985, he reoriented Soviet policy toward economic and political reform at home and a kind of détente abroad. Moreover, the United States found itself suddenly outflanked in arms control negotiations.

The administration split internally between those favoring accommodation and those favoring a continuing push for military superiority through a "Star Wars" program. After Reagan appeared to commit the U.S. to a far-ranging reduction of nuclear weapons at the Reykjavik negotiations in October 1986, conservatives became hopelessly divided. When the administration and the Soviet Union began to edge toward a treaty on intermediate nuclear forces in Europe, *National Review,* usually one of the administration's most loyal supporters, termed the pact "nuclear suicide" even though it had endorsed the treaty's terms five years before when they had been proposed by the United States. In the Senate, the treaty's chief supporters were liberal Democrats rather than conservative Republicans.

Administration attempts to "roll back" communism overseas also ran aground. Lacking public and congressional support for the

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Nicaraguan *contras*—in opinion polls, opposition to *contra* aid hovered between 60 and 70 percent—the administration attempted to accomplish covertly what it couldn't do openly by using the CIA and the National Security Council (NSC) secretly to sustain and direct the *contras*. The Iran-*contra* scandal was more than the work of duplicitous individuals in the NSC; it was also the outcome of the conservatives' attempt again to square their own political circle.

When the administration in August 1987 tentatively backed a peace accord for Central America that would have ruled out *contra* funding, conservative activists and the Republican presidential candidates denounced it. If Reaganomics had become a memory, the Reagan Doctrine increasingly became a reproach leveled by conservatives against the administration. Without a program that would resolve the contradiction between their own foreign policy aims and public opinion, conservatives contented themselves with arousing their own faithful.

Aware that their movement lacked a coherent program, a number of conservatives urged a focus on cultural issues rather than on economics and foreign policy. "The most important political idea of the mid-Eighties is cultural conservatism," wrote Paul Weyrich in May 1986. Lewis Lehrman, the millionaire founder of Citizens for America, expressed a similar view in a 1986 cover story for *National Review*. Comparing abortion to slavery and the present era to that before the Civil War, Lehrman predicted that "national politics during the late 1980s and the 1990s will be dominated by the great constitutional, moral, and social issues of our time."

But this perspective may offer little relief to conservatives in the years ahead. The success of the new right in using abortion as a political issue has depended on unique circumstances. The threat of feminism and the sexual revolution had to be sufficiently vivid to scare socially conservative Democrats into voting for Republicans, and the dissatisfaction with Democratic economic and foreign policy had to be sufficient not to frighten away cosmopolitan Republicans and baby-boom Independents. If conservatives focus on cultural issues in 1988 and beyond, they may scare off Republicans and Independents without attracting many Democrats. The signs were already visible in 1986 in several elections, where Republicans who ran on "cultural issues" generally fared poorly.

Even more important, Weyrich's and Lehrman's focus on cultural issues obscured the conservatives' lack of an actual political program to govern the country. Even if many voters agreed that supply-side tax cuts and 10 percent real increases in the military budget served a useful purpose in 1981, few believed that by the end of Reagan's second term.

Conservative organizations multiplied rapidly, but there were significant symptoms of decay and stagnation. By the end of Reagan's second term, there were signs that conservatives were losing their grip on the Republican party. Although conservative ideas dominated the race for the Republican presidential nomination, the two leading candidates, Vice President George Bush and Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole, displayed little loyalty to the conservative movement itself. The New Right was virtually shut out of both campaigns.

Neither Bush nor Dole represented the return of the liberal Republicanism of the 1950s. Dole's roots were in the anti–New Deal "Old Guard" midwestern party, while Bush was a hybrid of austere Yankee Republicanism and Texas conservatism. But both men are Republicans first and conservatives second. And both were more likely to seek policy guidance from Wall Street and corporate Republicans than from the policy experts of the Heritage Foundation.

Not all conservative organizations fared well during the Reagan years. The national groups most responsible for the conservative Senate victories in 1978 and 1980 either folded or lost most of their clout. In 1980, the Life Action Political Action Committee (LAPAC) led the campaign against the twelve liberal Senators it labeled the "dirty dozen." Six years later, deep in debt, it moved its offices from the Washington, D.C., suburbs to Everett, Wash-

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ington, where it played a minor role in state politics and none at all at the national level.

NCPAC, the National Political Action Committee, once the most feared New Right PAC, suffered a similar fate. In 1984, it went deeply into debt as a result of a mailing on behalf of President Reagan. In 1986, its founder and director, John "Terry" Dolan, died from AIDS. (Dolan's homosexuality had also divided the libertarian NCPAC from the other parts of the virulently antigay New Right.) The next year, Dolan's chosen successor, Brent Bozell III and Bozell's top aide quit in a dispute with the organization's board of directors and set up a rival group. NCPAC remains in Washington but no longer targets senators for defeat. It has virtually no impact on politics.

After the 1984 election, direct-mail specialist Richard Viguerie, who helped create a network of new-right lobbies and PACs in the late 1970s, laid off hundreds of employees and sold his magazine, *Conservative Digest*. Viguerie was also embroiled in a number of bitter disputes with organizations that had used his services. In 1986, for instance, Viguerie was sued by the National Tax Limitation Committee, which claimed that Viguerie was using its mailing list to collect money for "bogus entities."

AEI also endured financial losses, forcing the resignation of its president in 1986. These losses resulted from the flagging enthusiasm of corporate America for the conservative cause and the growing disenchantment of wealthy conservatives with an organization that was trying to position itself closer to the political mainstream. In 1986, the highly conservative Olin Foundation, which had given AEI $300,000 the year before, decided on political grounds to give it nothing.

Other organizations have suffered from a combination of waning political demand for their services and internal corruption. In 1984, the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), the first major conservative youth organization, nearly ceased to exist. A group of YAF leaders charged that the YAF director was siphoning off the organization's money—more than $150,000—for purely personal expenses. The director finally quit, but the organization was wracked by the bitter fight. The religious right, in the meantime, was rocked by the sex and financial scandals of televangelists Jim and Tammy Bakker, who were protégés of presidential candidate Pat Robertson. And the administration was rife with scandal, the most notable being that of the former White House aide closest to the Reagans, Michael Deaver, who was indicted for illegally using his White House influence.

Writing in the Heritage Foundation's *Policy Review*, Irving Kristol suggested that the Republican party, "when in office, always finds itself floundering in one squalid financial scandal after another—it does after all take money (as distinct from sex) seriously." But the Reagan administration is easily the most corrupt administration since that of Warren G. Harding. Neither its scandals nor those of conservatives could be explained simply by a natural interest in money. Instead, these scandals reflected a movement that had lost its idealistic purpose. In Washington, conservatism increasingly became a business rather than a cause.

As the organizations that helped engineer the conservative victory in 1980 floundered or folded, new organizations came forward to take their place. Some of them were highly problematic. For instance, the *Washington Times* became the main conservative newspaper in the country, with a daily circulation of 100,000, but the *Times*—and two other conservative publications, the magazine *Insight* and the journal *World and I*—were owned and controlled by a South Korean-based religious cult, the Unification Church. This religion is based on the belief that Sun Myung Moon is a son of God and therefore the Messiah; its goal is a global theocratic dictatorship. Besides anticommunism, wrote Andrew Ferguson in the *American Spectator*, "there is little else in Unificationism that American conservatives would find compelling." In April 1987, editorial page editor William Cheshire and four other editorial page employees quit to protest the Church's interference in the paper's editorials.

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A movement's health is reflected in its intellectual life. The birth of conservatism in the 1950s coincided with a burst of theoretical work, the founding of two important journals—*Modern Age* and *National Review*—and important books and articles by Russell Kirk, Whittaker Chambers, James Burnham, Robert Nisbet, Leo Strauss, and William F. Buckley, Jr. At each stage in the movement's growth, new magazines and new thinkers came forth to help revitalize the movement. In the late 1960s and the 1970s, Kevin Phillips, Irving Kristol and his *Public Interest*, and Norman Podhoretz's *Commentary* were important in defining the conservative strategy. In the early 1980s, Wanniski and George Gilder helped inspire the administration's support for supply-side economics, while Richard John Neuhaus and Allan Bloom provided a respectable gloss on the fundamentalist reaction against modernism and the sexual revolution.

But the signs of intellectual stagnation and drift were clear as the movement's thinkers were increasingly unable to reformulate their ideas in the light of changed experience. Rather than revise their basic ideas, Kemp, Wanniski, Lehrman, and the *Wall Street Journal* editorialists insisted that the recession of the early 1980s would not have occurred if the administration had prevented Federal Reserve Chief Paul Volcker from braking the money supply. The supply-siders did not acknowledge that Reagan and Volcker followed their original policy recommendations exactly. As remedy, the supply-siders urged a return to the gold standard. Other economists and public officials debated the proposal, but in the hands of the supply-siders, it became a magic wand that could wave away all economic ills. Their version of the gold standard was not economics, but sorcery.

In 1984, George Gilder, the author of *Wealth and Poverty,* published *The Spirit of Enterprise,* a paean to American entrepreneurialism and an attack against government intervention in the marketplace. One of Gilder's model enterprises was Micron Technology of Boise, Idaho, a five-year old firm that had captured the U.S. market in 64K ram chips. By the time Gilder's book came out, Micron was reeling from Japanese competition. In February 1985, it laid off 625 employees—half its total—and in June, it filed an antidumping suit with the government against Japanese companies. Indeed, Gilder's model of unfettered free enterprise was the very first U.S. chip manufacturer to ask for government protection against the Japanese. In Gilder's case, theory had become dogma.

The blind commitment of the supply-siders to their doctrine became even more evident after the stock market crash. Alan Reynolds, the chief economist for Jude Wanniski's consulting firm, Polyconomics, attributed the crash not to the artificial boom created by administration politics, but to the threat of a "return to heavy-handed and unpredictable government regulation." In a *National Review* article, Reynolds contrasted the "constructive" contribution of supply-side economics in the United States and the United Kingdom with the "forces of darkness [that] have appeared to be gaining the upper hand in the United States, Germany, and Japan." Reynolds's postcrash prescription for the American economy: more supply-side economics.

Conservative intellectuals found themselves equally unable to adapt their view of the world to the changes that Gorbachev was making in the Soviet Union. In 1956, conservatives had denounced Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's attack against Stalin as a ruse. Now they interpreted Gorbachev's programs of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the same light. In the *Washington Times,* Martin Sieff tried to demonstrate that *glasnost* was "being used to mask repressive measures aimed at disciplining the labor force and smothering human rights activists and those seeking religious freedom." Columnist George Will wrote that "*glasnost* can never be more than a carefully controlled tactic to confuse the West and motivate the Soviet masses with a tantalizing mirage of freedom just over a forever receding horizon."

They took the same attitude toward any changes in Soviet foreign policy or in the policy of countries that they believed to be Soviet satellites. Writing in *Commentary,* neoconservative Eugene Rostow declared that the Soviet Union's apparent arms control

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Standard-bearer George Bush, shown here on a visit to Pease AFB in Dover, N.H., is unlikely to fill conservatives' dreams. (Liz Green/IMPACT VISUALS)

concessions were really intended to gain an "offensive first-strike capability." Podhoretz, for his part, compared Gorbachev to Hitler.

What was distinctive about these opinions was not their conclusion but their reasoning. Indeed, one could note, for instance, the tenuousness or precariousness of Gorbachev's *glasnost*. But it is one thing to remark upon the difficulty of change and another to rule out its existence on *a priori* ideological grounds. Like the supply-side economists, the foreign policy conservatives betrayed a rigid dogmatism that brooked no contradiction.

Conservative views of social policy also stiffened in the late 1980s. Beginning in the late 1960s with Irving Kristol's influential collection, *On the Democratic Idea in America,* conservatives had staked out a position in opposition to the cultural assumptions of the New Left and of modern feminism. In the 1980s the movement's view of cultural issues appears to have been intellectually corrupted rather than inspired by its association with the Reagan administration. Neoconservative intellectuals increasingly allowed political imperatives to dictate their own thinking on highly philosophical issues. And traditional conservatives waged a bitter and often petty two-term battle with neoconservatives over appointments, a battle that by 1986 dominated the proceedings of the philosophically oriented Philadelphia Society.

William Bennett, the former philosophy professor and liberal turned neoconservative bureaucrat, was one of the administration's more thoughtful officials, but as he became entangled in internal disputes and beholden to conservative pressure groups, his own views became increasingly compromised. An initial foe of fundamentalist efforts to replace or supplement the theory of evolution with creationism, he defended their judgment—"the judgment of the community"—against "experts" in a 1986 speech.

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Equivocation was apparent also in Irving Kristol, who, in a *New York Times* op-ed column, advanced the novel thesis that fundamentalist opposition to the doctrine of evolution was the result of the "dogmatic crusade" against creationism by proponents of evolution. Kristol argued that "the current teaching of evolution in our public schools does indeed have an ideological bias against religious belief—teaching as 'fact' what is only hypothesis."

In the conservative movement's first decades, the dominant religious trend among conservatives was toward a kind of aesthetic English Catholicism, epitomized by Buckley and by Catholic convert Russell Kirk. But in the late 1980s, a highly anti-intellectual Pietist fervor swept conservatives. Its arch proponent was *Washington Times* staff columnist John Lofton, a convert to a bizarre form of born-again Christianity devised by R. J. Rushdooney. Rushdooney's followers, the Reconstructionists, seek to recreate their image of a Biblical social order in which sodomy, incorrigibility, blasphemy, and breaking the Sabbath are capital crimes. In his columns and public appearances, Lofton took upon himself the task of questioning the Christian credentials of other conservatives, including Buckley. Rather than being isolated as a crank, Lofton was accorded respect and even deference by other conservatives.

Lofton was an extreme case, but other prominent conservatives displayed variations on the same evangelical spirit in which one's religious—or political—beliefs accord a person membership in a godly elect. Reagan's top domestic adviser, Gary Bauer, argued that Georgia's laws making oral and anal sex a felony—even in private, between consenting adults—should be adopted by other states. His report on the family treated welfare as a form of self-inflicted injury.

This kind of evangelical fervor isolated the right in the 1950s and early 1960s; its replacement by a more political and ecumenical politics was key to the movement's success from 1966 through 1984. If it becomes a dominant strand in current conservatism, it may prevent it from adapting to the politics of the 1990s.

What Next?

Modern conservatism's historical trajectory has been similar to that of modern American liberalism. Liberalism emerged in the 1930s during Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. It incorporated and modified the program of prior historical movements—populism, socialism, middle-class progressivism, corporate reform.

American conservatism also incorporated and redefined the program of past movements. It shared the old right's fervent anticommunism, its hatred of the New Deal and the welfare state, its xenophobia, and its small-town morality. But it repudiated the old right's anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism and substantially modified its isolationism. The result was a new conservative movement—one that had never existed before and bore only a distant resemblance to movements of the same name in Great Britain and Europe.

Both movements endured cycles of success and failure, growth and stagnation, roughly at ten-year intervals. Liberalism suffered decline from the late 1930s through World War II but revived and was redefined during the first Truman administration, when Americans for Democratic Action was formed. By the late 1940s, it was again on the defensive. It revived in the late 1950s and enjoyed an Indian summer during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

Both movements were able to sustain their influence even when they were out of power nationally. From 1932 through 1952, liberals were able to transform the judiciary and the major government institutions in their image. They were also able to establish a political infrastructure of lobbies and think tanks in Washington that would continue to defend liberal ideas even when liberals were not in office. Thus, the influence of liberalism persisted during the Eisenhower years; and when Kennedy took office in 1961, liberal policy makers were ready to step in and run the government.

Conservatives have had only eight years in power, but they have gained experience in the

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federal bureaucracies and established a network of pressure groups, think tanks, and consultancies that will survive even if a Democrat replaces Reagan.

Finally, both movements succeeded because their leading ideas reflected the imperatives of the nation. Liberalism enabled America to escape the threat of recurring depression and to assume a role as the leader of Western capitalism; it was an optimistic philosophy that stressed the power of Americans to remake their country and the world. Conservatism is a defensive philosophy that seeks to arrest America's decline in the world. Its optimism is rooted entirely in the fantasy of a recovered past. It is a deeply irrational faith but appeals to a public driven by social discontent and intoxicated by imperial nostalgia.

The conservatives of the late 1980s, however, are weaker than liberals of the late 1940s in several respects. The liberals could constitute themselves as the governing arm of the Democratic party and take advantage of its deep local roots. Indeed, Democrats have not lost the House since 1952 and lost the Senate for only eight of these thirty-six years. To the conservatives' chagrin, the Republican party has not become a national majority party. It remains a marginal local party in much of the South, despite the popularity of some conservative ideas; and it is losing influence in local and state elections in the Northeast. "We have no power," writes Paul Weyrich. "Having power presupposes holding 'territory.' Nowhere in America today are conservative agendas moving through state legislatures."

Liberalism was also a far more varied and spontaneous movement than the conservatism of the 1980s was. In the late 1970s and during the Reagan years, conservatives were doing consciously what liberals did largely on an ad hoc spontaneous basis.

The conservatives, in addition, continued to lack mass institutions comparable to the labor movement. As the travails of Viguerie and the New Right demonstrated, organizations based on economic commonality could endure where those based on ideological mailing lists fell apart. In the late 1980s, the only conservative institution capable of playing the same role is the religious right, but it tends to divide, rather than unite, the movement.

Perhaps most important of all the distinctions, liberalism had an underlying program of Keynesian intervention in the economy and free trade that for three decades satisfied Americans' desire for a rising standard of living. It remains to be seen whether the conservative program can achieve more than a selective and limited prosperity.

The ultimate question for conservatism after Reagan is not whether it will muddle through, but whether it can enjoy the kind of revival that the liberalism of the 1940s enjoyed in the 1960s. This will depend on the movement's ability, on the one hand, to avoid the shoals of the right-wing sectarianism and, on the other, to establish political power in the cities and the states. It will not be easy. □

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Claude Lefort

1968 REVISITED: A FRENCH VIEW

Not Revolution, but Creative Disorder

PARIS

In 1968 I wrote an essay entitled "Le Désordre nouveau"*—it was written hurriedly, in the heat of the events. There is a passion in it that may seem surprising today. But at least I gave no credence to expectations that the May events heralded a revolution. I emphasized that the students' audacity had been accompanied by a new kind of realism. This was in sharp contrast to most other commentaries, which tended to note only the movement's messianism and utopianism or else chided it for its inability to crystallize clear principles. I concluded by suggesting that "the revolution has matured," because the people who set its style had not sought confrontation with the existing regime in order to replace it with another and because their desire to *changer la vie,* however radical, was not based on the myth of a "good society," a community devoid of differences and conflict.

The passion was widely shared in 1968. It affected even a man like Raymond Aron, ordinarily so careful to keep passion in check. The plain fact is that at the time it was impossible to make sense of the events without abandoning the stance of mere onlooker. And I would add that now, twenty years later, those who seek to minimize the impact of May 1968 and do not try to make the past come alive as any good historian should are abandoning the mainspring of understanding.

Perhaps it is best to recall a few little incidents. No one who worked in a university at the time—or in a high school, scientific laboratory, hospital, or any of the countless other places in which protest took hold—was able to interpret the events dispassionately once his authority, or that of his colleagues, had been challenged. Many refused to ask themselves hard questions, but even they were touched in some part of themselves that they had tried to ignore. I was then dividing my time between Paris and Caen, and though I did sometimes encounter people who remained unruffled, I never met anyone who was indifferent. Just a few remarks would send temperatures rising. Professors, for instance, were often heckled by students in the lecture hall. They were suddenly called upon to defend their teaching, to justify the prevailing rules, the system of courses and exams. Or a student would interrupt to urge the audience to join in a spontaneous demonstration. The professors saw this as more than a mere assault on conventions: confidence in their authority had been undermined, and they were compelled, whether they liked it or not, to abandon their usual roles and become actors in an unpredictable adventure. All those little incidents, taken together, were what really determined the nature of May '68. The memory of all the expressly political discussions and the street-fighting now tends to make us forget that.

Which only goes to show, it may be argued, how impossible it is to assess events as they happen. In that feverish atmosphere, how could

*In *La Brèche,* in collaboration with E. Morin and J. P. Coudray (Paris: Le Seuil, 1968).

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anyone have maintained the objectivity that understanding requires?

But it must be wondered what objectivity really means even under ordinary circumstances. Doesn't life in a democracy require, as a matter of principle, that we all use our own judgment? Isn't there a kind of torpor that impedes its exercise, that makes traditional authority and a kind of automatic obedience seem natural, and that silences dissent when the stakes are low? Under extraordinary circumstances, on the other hand, doesn't it suddenly become necessary to make judgments, to look afresh at those who stand above and below us, and to speak openly?

Every revolution has this paradoxical trait. On the one hand, it so inflames passions that some, whichever side they are on, lose sight of the distinction between the real and the imaginary, the possible and the impossible. On the other hand, it unleashes a will to self-assertion, to separate the true from the false, not only among those who previously never doubted their prerogatives but also, and most important, among those accustomed to silence and submission.

Earlier I denied that a revolution, or even the onset of a revolution, occurred in 1968. How, then, can I justify this last comment without falsely labeling May '68? Well, I do not think that the difficulty of properly characterizing May '68 should prevent us from using revolutionary precedents to clarify it—provided that we do not become prisoners of a definition.

There was, I say again, no revolution in 1968. The main reason was that the agitation was essentially confined to the world of the campus, even though its effects did reach a considerable portion of the population. Students cannot make a revolution; at most they can detonate one. In this instance, only a very small fraction of them nurtured that project; the bulk of them never dreamed of it. Moreover, the sympathy, even support, they received was never more than moderate. When the workers, blue- and white-collar alike, did mobilize, they raised limited demands that did not threaten state power. The broader population was divided. Some wanted a different government, though not a different system.

Nevertheless, the turmoil that swept society for a time, though it led neither to insurrection nor to civil war (I might even say, to pacify those who find this discussion ridiculous, that it achieved no lasting tangible result), was in some respects reminiscent of the stirrings of revolution in England in the middle of the seventeenth century, in America and France in the eighteenth, and in Russia in the twentieth. Such turmoil, of course, is only one component of revolution, but it is sufficiently out of the ordinary that we may not ignore it. It gives rise, for varying lengths of time, to a kind of wildcat democracy, which, though all trace of it may be lost, even lost forever, nevertheless reveals specific aspirations of the modern world. The great revolutions I mentioned saw an unexpected convergence of demands mobilizing sometimes contradictory interests and beliefs. An explosive mix of protest was generated by the archaic character of prevailing moral standards and institutions, on the one hand, and modernization, with all its destructive effects, on the other. In all cases there was a remarkable liberation of the word, a proliferation of pamphlets, harangues, sermons, and slogans, and, at the same time, the advent or sudden broadening of a public space in which people who had hitherto been unaware of each other's existence, either because they really were strangers or because they had been indifferent despite sharing a common life or place of work, now came together and engaged in intense dialogue. The quality of this new space, this new field of discussion, was such that individuals who had lacked the competence or authority to speak or act in their own names suddenly improvised a public existence, sought interlocutors who became, in their eyes, substitutes for a universal addressee, and strove to legislate either for their own milieu or for all society.

The smashing of taboos, the overturning of the conventions that assign each person a given place and role in society, the flowering of hitherto closely watched speech, and the proliferation of individual or collective initiatives herald not so much an uprising (the traditional image of revolution) as a kind of

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decompartmentalization of society, the opening of a breach that allows a new circulation of individuals and a new exchange of ideas. This is one of the aspects of the revolutionary phenomenon. I highlight it not to celebrate what I have called wildcat democracy. I am not unaware of its ambiguities. But the emergence of a new public space, the liberation that I see as inherent in revolution, along with the dissolution of the hallmarks of social life—all this I find in May '68. Let those who recall only the ludicrous words and deeds while ignoring the salutary shaking of conventions take a long fresh look at revolutions.

Some analysts, claiming that events always outstrip the consciousness of the participants, tend to disdain their passions. But if you forget the enthusiasm, the excesses, the outrageousness, the conversion of previously peaceable and silent individuals into impassioned partisans, you will never come close to the reality of revolution. And if you do not *see* it, in vain will you seek to understand it. If you insist on judging extraordinary feelings and actions by the standards of ordinary conduct, then you will see only delirium or, as some have put it, collective psychodrama. If, on the other hand, you try to understand what is really being said in a confused but resolute protest whose boldness surprises not only its targets but first and foremost its own participants; if you look beyond the emotions of the moment and separate the arguments developed by commonly respected thinkers from the spectacle of the rise of an anonymous social power and of the fragility of democratic rights, then you will ask yourself whether May '68 was not perhaps a symptom, the expression of discord deeply concealed in democratic society.

There are those who demand a scientific analysis of May '68, who ask that its causes be detailed and its effects be measured. Causes, I would agree, most often deserve a place in interpretation. But the particularity of the events threatens to vanish in the course of the analysis. It is only too tempting to conclude that history could well have done without them. This kind of approach is not limited to May '68; it is a general feature of thought. Tocqueville was so intent on demonstrating the continuity of French history from the ancien regime to the July monarchy that in the end he came to see the revolution as a futile and costly detour, however convinced he was of its extraordinary and universal import. How many historians have denied that the term "revolution" can properly be applied to the events that shook England in the 1640s or America during the War of Independence? The opposite danger would undoubtedly be to dissect revolutions by looking for signs of an absolutely clear beginning. Then the celebration mechanism takes effect, as rival schools each seek to appropriate the primordial message.

At the moment, it is most often burial ceremonies that are being held for May '68. Twenty years later, we commemorate nothing. A naive observer might wonder about the reason for this oblivion. I am tempted to reply that the insignificance accorded May '68 is proof that the society in which we live is a prisoner of vanity. Intellectual fashion is always so inventive. No longer is capitalism on trial, with Marxism presiding, nor is the consumer society, mass culture, or media manipulation in the dock, with critical sociology presiding. These themes are still worked, indeed they are inexhaustible, but it is now considered vulgar to speak in terms of condemnation. It is so much more refined to point to the realm of appearances, to talk not of social dissolution (which would suggest that there had once been cohesion) but of the abandonment of any scenario for the human drama.

Particularly symptomatic is Gilles Lipovetski's interpretation of May '68: "A revolution without goals, without program, with neither victims nor villains, and without political leadership, May '68, despite its lively utopianism, was a soft and sloppy movement, the first indifferent revolution." This author has a particular model of how to structure society, the one upheld by Marxist ideology as espoused by the members of the Communist party. They, of course, had a goal: the establishment of a fully rational society; they had a program: the conquest of state power; they obeyed the discipline of a party; they dreamed of destroying the class enemy and of a

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A new generation of students takes to the streets in 1986. (Rosette Coryell/IMPACT VISUALS)

never-ending prosecution of villains. Must the 1968 "revolution" therefore be called "indifferent" because it broke with this ideology? And must the young people who rebelled against the dogmatism and authoritarianism of the bureaucrats be considered "soft" just because they had no blood lust?

Linked to the thesis that the democratic revolution is merged with the progressive unleashing of individualism—a thesis whose paternity he attributes to Tocqueville, although it constitutes only one articulation of his interpretation—Lipovetski unhesitatingly discerns behind the appearance of communitarian aspirations a final thrust of individualism. There is no doubt that he would recognize it everywhere, where the public sphere is deserted, or where it is filled by individuals. Tocqueville distinguished two aspects of the emergence of the individual: an isolation that induces a turning inward of the self and independence. He had a vivid enough sociological sensibility to understand that isolation brings with it the seduction of the individual by common opinion; he was keenly aware of the relationship between individualism and conformism. Perhaps his only error was in not registering the diverse modes of conformism, struck as he was by the rise of a social force capable of shaping us all to the same mold. But to follow his inspiration, he would have undoubtedly rediscovered in the privatism and narcissism of our contemporaries one of the manifestations of conformism; and he would not have confused it with the sense of independence that seemed to him equally essential to democratic life.

Yet the sense of independence sharpens the desire to think and act in ways that challenge constraints that are deemed arbitrary. This sense of independence is not in contradiction to a sense of community. The wider it spreads, the more active society becomes, the richer public debate and the more vital the fabric of relations between individuals and groups. In other words, individual freedoms and political freedoms sustain one another. To attempt to describe what happened in May 1968 as a

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counterposition of collectivism and individualism in which the latter was hidden behind the former is to neglect what was most important. It is a failure to understand that the assertion of individuals as individuals—in their own initiatives and in their refusal to bow to arbitrary rules or to let themselves be ordered around by professional revolutionaries speaking the same wooden language—was itself part and parcel of the will to forge a great public space within which answers could be given to questions of common interest.

My essay had a somewhat provocative title: "The New Disorder." The image of disorder most often provokes condemnation or indignation. As we know, it was cleverly exploited by the far right and by fascists, who relentlessly condemned the licentiousness, weakness, unruliness, and divisions of "bourgeois society" and proclaimed themselves the champions of a new order. I appropriated the image in an effort to show that May '68 was not an attack on the established order designed to replace it with a better one—to be inaugurated through the inevitable terror and rigid ideology—but represented a demand for a kind of disorder that would be in society's interest, a permanent challenge to the powers that be, and that it was very much concerned to assert its own legitimacy and to win recognition of it. For a small number of people, of course, this challenge to the powers that be was combined with the hope of a complete overthrow of existing institutions. But what I saw as important—and still find striking—was that the most creative elements, though they did take up some themes of Marxism or critical sociology, transformed them by deciding to take the side of people: those (preferably the ones closest to them) who were responsible for running an institution, but also anonymous people encountered in the street, those whose habit it had been to obey and to tailor their desires to suit whatever was asked of them.

It is not my intention to assess whether it was naive to apply social criticism to people, nor how dubious it may have been, since we were still pursuing abstract monsters: the System, Society, Power. My point is that a new language and a new style of action were born in 1968. Reference to great principles was no longer enough; often it even seemed suspect. Theory as such aroused distrust like that inspired by party discipline. The essential thing was the idea that the opportunities for action were here and now, in full view of others, in situations often reminiscent of stage productions. Hence the instances of heckling, of provocation (which only rarely became persecution), the object of which was to expose not only what conventional discourse concealed but also the belief in the existing order that sustained it. It was indeed this practice that helped spread the challenge to authority from one milieu to another, from universities to high schools or hospitals, sometimes to factories, definitely to the family, and even to the churches.

Commentators have had much to say about the power of the word and the shaking of authority. But they have not been attentive enough to the change that occurred with the incorporation of conflicts of ideas into the fabric of personal relations. In this I see not so much a sign of the expansion of individualism as a new demand to bring what used to belong to the realm of pure theory back to the level of the practical. The changes that have occurred since 1968 in relations between women and men, parents and children, teachers and pupils, and even in the forms of struggle against racism (which, instead of trumpeting a principle appeal to the image of the friend, the "buddy"), seem to me to bear the stamp of that demand.

Rereading my old essay, I find that it suffers from a failure to situate May '68 more clearly within the framework of democratic society. If May did not bring about a revolution, it was not only because it was essentially a movement of students, as I argued then, but above all because democracy is a system within which conflict, however intense, is accommodated as a matter of course. Democracy is a system that allows itself to be shaken and does not disarm the hope for change. It must not (unless it is to be destroyed not by revolution but by a totalitarian movement) be confused with capitalism, or with the rule of bureaucracy, or with the empire of

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technology, no matter how inextricably and tragically it may be linked to them.

Several years ago, quite by accident, I came across the text of the lectures given by Jules Michelet at the Collège de France in 1847. Gaéton Picon had republished the volume, astonished to discover a language so close to that of May '68. The students of 1968, of course, would not have appreciated the historian's patriotism nor the bombast of this or that formula. But he tells his students what the May activists would have wanted to hear. He asks them to break out of the "magic circle" in which some would keep them. He denounces the intolerable division of labor in the university, designed to adapt them to the needs of the adult world. He calls upon them to distrust "grand modern mechanics" and combat those who have only contempt for "the action of the word." A student, he felt, was above all else a person who still enjoyed the ability to feel and want: "Soon he will be narrowed, limited by a specialized trade; he will be a doctor, a lawyer, a businessman. Today he is a man. He is still interested in men." He invited that student to "do what is not done for him," to give himself a "countereducation." Picon, who introduces Michelet's lectures in a lovely preface, believes that his conception of history is best summed up in a single sentence: "Order is Michelet's clearest enemy." Reading his lectures, I felt myself in good company.

TRANSLATED BY JON ROTHSCHILD □

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Aleksander Wat

"TELL PEOPLE HOW OLD STEKLOV DIED!"

Aleksander Wat was born in Warsaw in 1900 to a family of Polish-Jewish intelligentsia. As a young man he was a founder of the Polish futurist literary movement; in 1929 he became editor of the communist magazine The Literary Monthly. *When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Wat and his family fled from Warsaw and, once the family was separated, he ended up in Lwow. Wat was arrested in January 1940 by the Soviet authorities and sent to Lubyanka prison in Moscow. After Hitler's invasion of Russia, he was transferred to a prison in Saratov, where he underwent a conversion to Christianity. In 1941 he was released. He then lived through the Stalinist period in Poland, suffering persecution for his opinions and writings. In the late 1950s the Wats settled in Paris, where he continued his career as a poet. In 1964-65 he spent several weeks in Berkeley, California, taping his memoirs in response to questions from the distinguished poet Czeslaw Milosz. Wat died in Paris in 1967.*

This, in bare outline, is the life story of a remarkably interesting literary-intellectual figure. The memoirs he dictated, under Milosz's delicate prompting, form a brilliant account of European cultural and political life in the twentieth century. Ably translated by Richard Lourie and with an excellent foreword by Milosz, they have now been published by the University of California Press as a book entitled My Century. *Many absorbing segments might have been excerpted, but Wat had a way of weaving different stories and thoughts together, so that it became difficult to find one that would seem self-sufficient.*

The following excerpt, which is largely self-sufficient, concerns the fate of an old Bolshevik whom Wat met in a prison hospital in Saratov. The biographical entry at the back of the book for this once-famous figure reads: Steklov, Yuri M. *(orig. O. M. Nahamkes) (1873-1941)—Russian Bolshevik; editor-in-chief of* Izvestiya. *Victim of Stalin's purges.*

—I.H.

Steklov, the editor of *Izvestiya,* the worthy author of large books on Chernyshevsky, literature, politics; an associate of Lenin; Stalin was very fond of him. Steklov told stories that would make Stalin burst out laughing. An old SD, an old socialist. The fiftieth anniversary of Steklov's joining the party was supposed to be celebrated with great ceremony under the patronage of Stalin himself. Preparations were made, portraits in the newspapers. Everything was fine, and then the day before, or a few days before, bang, Steklov was locked up. His family was locked up too, his wife and son. And then in a strange act of mercy, Stalin not only released the wife and son but did not even have them made "disenfranchised citizens"; they were able to return to Moscow, where they were given part of the apartment they had previously occupied.

When she was released, Steklov's wife, of course, began running to see everyone she could for help. That was a very strange thing, but even during the worst periods of the terror, the wives were allowed to make a fuss. Later,

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they were often exiled, but if they weren't arrested, they were allowed to go around everywhere and even create scenes. The prosecutors would flee from those wives; they were afraid of them. One of life's mysteries. That was the arrangement, the setup. Brutality was not permitted against the wife of an arrested man, provided the wife was not under arrest herself. So Steklov's wife began making the rounds of the offices. She was told one thing and another, but after a time she received official written notice that Steklov had died.

. . . Steklov . . . had been in Lubyanka for a very short time after his arrest and then was sent immediately to Omsk Central—you know, I always mix up Omsk and Tomsk, and so I wouldn't bet my life that it was Omsk Central or Tomsk Central—in any case, one of the famous centrals that basically were mausoleums for those who had been buried alive. They were all in solitary there, comfortable; every cell had its own toilet; they were fed well, they had books. A person could be in there ten years, and no one apart from the NKVD would ever know he was alive. Besides, even at Lubyanka there were rumors that people who had supposedly been executed were in fact in one of those centrals. There were even "gilded cages" like that in Lubyanka. Certain outstanding scientists were able to do work in their fields and were given whatever they wanted—food, clothing, everything. But that other central was actually extremely dismal, a tomb. Josek had been told by Steklov's family that he had died of a heart attack. But even those tombs had been disrupted by the war, and people began to be pulled out of them and sent to Moscow. At the very beginning of the war Steklov had been returned to Lubyanka and soon after had been sent on to Saratov.

At one point, just after the Revolution, Steklov had announced that he was writing a two- or three-volume study of Chernyshevsky. This work was looked on with such favor that he was given documents from the archives. Stalin had made a cult of Chernyshevsky, and so Steklov assumed that his work had been facilitated on orders from Stalin himself. Apparently Steklov had come close to finishing the work, and so it's somewhere in the NKVD archives.

You asked me how he and I could talk when we were both running high temperatures. But you know, a temperature can focus your attention and make the mind rapacious. And I also realized that I had a unique chance to get inside information on various things that had been gnawing at me for years, for example, the trials, the confessions, and so on. It was a clear-minded conversation, and, in fact, if it were reproduced on tape, it would certainly hold together and be logical, though there'd also be a certain feverishness about it. The look on his face was very different during that conversation; he had come very much back to life, though at times he would fade away. I was experiencing something different, and somehow it seemed to happen mostly when he was talking about Stalin. He spoke readily about Stalin.

Suddenly—despite all efforts and all my desire to listen—my attention, which is the basis of memory, began to flow away from me. I had the feeling of it flowing away to some sea, some sea within me. Far, far away, and I couldn't do anything to stop it. There'd be breaks, blank spots, gaps; then I'd come to and be listening to him again. I mostly listened and only spoke to ask questions.

Even though it was late autumn in Saratov, it was a warm day, something like autumn in Poland, sunny and bright. The two of us were just skin and bones; Steklov was swollen but desiccated. And we had that strange conversation on history, with me avid for the truth. Well, it was so bright in there, the room was so bathed in light, that I was able to observe him closely. A certain nobility, something aristocratic about his face. Very dry skin, wrinkles. I remember the wrinkles, but the general impression was of a smooth face. And though his skin drooped a bit, the face had a certain energy to it, so you weren't aware of that loose skin. His nose was quite prominent but did not dominate; the eyes dominated. Very dry eyes, the eyes of a deranged man, but they had a certain fire to them. How to put it—they had fire but no light. I don't know if you can say that. A certain dry fire. He spoke with incredible contempt about the heroes of the Revolution and Stalin: that lowlife Trotsky, that swine Ordzhonikidze. I don't know if he spoke about Lenin; that I

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don't recall. There was also hatred when he spoke of Stalin, a terrible hatred, a hatred all his own—one that was in fact keeping him alive. He gave the impression of being very sick, alive only because of that hatred.

My primary intention was to get him to shed some light on the trials, which remain a mystery no matter what. What was the purpose of those trials? Why precisely that sort? Why did the heroes of the Revolution confess? I asked Steklov that question: "Why did the heroes of the Revolution fall so low? Were they afraid of torture?" His answer: "Torture? Torture, for us? What for? All of us, all of us [this I recall nearly verbatim—a shudder went through me, a cold shudder through my feverish body because of the way he said this], we were all up to our elbows in shit and blood. Each one of us heroes of the Revolution who'd been arrested knew that we could be presented with such a bill of immorality and degradation and villainy that dated back almost to the very start that nothing really mattered to us anymore. To confess or not to confess, that was no issue. Those people confessed because they were disgusted by their past."

Steklov's gaze was so heavy when he spoke of those things that I could feel the weight of it on me. That was the special feature of his eyes, not so much their dry fire as the incredible weight of his gaze. You felt it on your skin, especially when he was talking about the heroes of the Revolution. He used vulgar words but always spoke with splendid refinement.

What do I remember of what he said about Stalin? Not much. Perhaps the fever made me try so hard to remember and to remember so little. He told me about Yenukidze's fall. I checked that out later on in the literature. Steklov had a different version, a so-called unknown version, but one that I think was quite common in those times. Yenukidze was something of a master for Stalin, who listened to what he had to say for quite a long time; his opinion mattered to Stalin. Yenukidze was a gentleman, a bon vivant, a Georgian socialist, which was a very refined type. Ceretelli, the whole group of socialists, excellent Marxists, an entire school. They had great contempt for Stalin at the very beginning, and there was also that story of Stalin's robbing the train; he had a very ugly reputation. And so Stalin destroyed them, but clearly Yenukidze had been Stalin's hero as a young man, and Yenukidze must have so impressed him that Stalin spared him and he set great store by him.

But Yenukidze had a daughter who was a devotée in the cult of Stalin. By then, the father was very careful. A bon vivant, an old man, he wanted to die a natural death. He did nothing wrong. But he obviously did not conceal anything from his daughter, and he spoke ill of Stalin to her. And she went running to Stalin. That must have been very cutting for Stalin, and Yenukidze was locked up. Besides, there was a similar incident with Warski, which people talk about in Warsaw but which, of course, has never been in print. Stalin probably would have spared Warski, too. He was retired, old, out of things. He lived in the Kremlin, a favorite; he'd received honors. But he used to go for lunch with an old friend from his youth, Dzierżyński's widow. And she ran to Stalin and repeated what Warski had said about him. And so they took Warski away. So that was a rather common occurrence with those Passionaras, those devotées of the cult of Stalin. It's odd that looks played no role here, for there's no question that there was a sexual undercurrent to all that, but male good looks played no role in it; rather, it was power. Because Stalin was basically monstrous-looking: a low shaggy forehead, a short man with a pockmarked face and horrible eyes.

What else did Steklov say about Stalin and Stalin's court? That it wasn't a court but a clique, actually just a gang, that he chose mainly people who were extremely vulgar, common, and coarse. He spoke with disgust about those conversations around the table over vodka when important decisions were being made, the extreme vulgarity and cruelty of those people.

At one point, toward the end of our talk, Steklov said to me, "When you return [this I remember verbatim], when you return to Poland, you absolutely have to tell people how old Steklov died!"

To which I replied immediately, and sin-

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cerely, because that's what I thought, "I'll never return there!"

He grew angry at me. "Of course you'll return; you absolutely will!"

And then I realized that this old erratic egocentric thought that I had to return because now I had a mission to carry out: to tell people how old Steklov had died. Then they came for us, and that was the end of the conversation. They took him first, and he shouted it from the doorway again, "Tell people in Poland how old Steklov died!"

They took him; then they came for me. I was taken to a rather large hospital room entered directly from the corridor. Steklov was two or three doors down from me. They had excellent medicine for dysentery there, and after three days I was able to get out of bed and go to the bathroom myself. Conditions were rather free there—a soldier in front of each ward, but the corridor wasn't guarded and I could hear Steklov's voice from there. Once I heard him say, "*Radi Boga*" (For God's sake), but by then his voice sounded like a broken instrument. He was calling somebody, probably the nurse.

I stood in front of his door twice in one day, on my fifth or sixth day there. Once, in the morning, the guard—you could tell by his face he was gentle—let me stand there, but he said, "No talking allowed here."

But Steklov had noticed me and once again he said, "Tell people how old Nahamkes Steklov died!" I remember that he used his first name that time. For the first time, I made a gesture of friendship and he too placed his hand on his heart, a nice smile on his face. I stopped by his door again that evening. He'd changed terribly; his face had changed completely, like day and night. His eyelids were lowered, just narrow slits now, eyelids that I had observed closely in that waiting room and that were almost like fine Chinese porcelain, but now they were thick like tires, and his face wasn't so much a death's head as the head of Ramses, the mummy of Ramses. His jaw was already drooping, his breathing was heavy, he didn't say anything.1 He still shouted a few times about Stalin, his obsession. And the nurse in our ward, a very kind old woman—all those old nurses were very kind—would cross herself on the sly whenever Steklov said Stalin's name. It was obvious he was dying. I never saw him again. □

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Mitchell Cohen

LOOKING AT SARTRE

Engaged Life, Ambiguous Afterlife

The late French philosopher is squatting in the corridor. He is gazing, with his one good eye, through a keyhole out at the world. Perched forward, squinting, he is aware solely of the aperture and what he sees through it; he is simply his own acts. Suddenly, footsteps. Many footsteps. They are looking at him. His biographers. His commentators. Reviewers of his biographers and commentators. Shall Jean-Paul Sartre's specter be shamed?

In the "keyhole" passage of *Being and Nothingness,* perhaps the most renowned in this existential tome, Sartre sought to describe how we are "constituted" by the consciousness of an "Other." A *voyeur,* suddenly aware that he may be observed peering through his peephole in a hallway, becomes, in Sartre's example, an object in the world for someone else. As a consequence of "the Look of the Other," he finds his self-grounding and freedom escaping him, for he is no longer simply his own acts. And in this situation he feels shame "in the *recognition* of the fact that I *am* indeed the object which the Other is looking at and judging."

Hence the problem as a torrent of new literature on Sartre[1] flows from the presses: How shall these Others constitute him and his accomplishment—a massive corpus of philosophical texts, essays, plays, interviews, novels, short stories, biographies, and autobiography that continues to expand with posthumously published materials? At the beginning of *The Family Idiot,* the unfinished multivolume study of Flaubert that was his last great project, Sartre commented that "a corpse is open to all comers." The issue, it would seem, is the relation between Sartre's corpse and his corpus.

No, the issue is also that of his ghost and afterlife, especially since many French intellectuals nowadays seek to fashion a new Gallic liberalism. How, eight years after Sartre's death, shall we regard this most powerful of postwar Parisian intellects, one who was resolutely *engagé* and not a *voyeur,* one whom a French head of state—the state Sartre wanted to overthrow—declined to arrest on the grounds that you do not seize Voltaire? Indeed, it is to a Voltaire or a Victor Hugo that one must look to find a figure whose dominance of the French intellectual world rivaled that of Sartre, as Anna Boschetti remarks in her recent *Sartre et "Les Temps modernes."* He remains a singular presence, but also an absence, even as French eyes are increasingly cast back toward Tocqueville and Guizot.

In point of fact, Sartre's greatest impact in France was in the decade and a half after the liberation of Paris, and it was in the 1960s that his philosophical influence began to wane. As fads, "structuralist," "poststructuralist," and "postmodernist," began to clutter stage center in the Latin Quarter (they have since gone trans-Atlantic) and as Sartre became blind and physically infirm in the 1970s, what remained was less his ideas than his shadow, which, though cast far beyond his diminutive physical stature, was a shadow nonetheless. The aftermath of 1968, with the Fifth Republic's restabilization and the eventual disintegration of the New Left, only facilitated this. French thought became increasingly disparate; no center held.

It was no longer the moment of the radical,

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humanist man of letters engaged in worldly affairs, but of what has been called anti-philosophers who tended to doubt the efficacy of human knowledge and action and to dismiss "humanism" as a naive conceit of modern times. Human beings were reinvented by them as flailers in an ocean of "texts," the task being to "deconstruct" the waters rather than swim in them. In a more directly political vein, the 1970s saw the emergence of the so-called "New Philosophers," of whom Bernard Henri-Lévy is perhaps the most famous. From them came an array of anti-Marxist diatribes that were, more than anything else, exorcisms either of infantile leftist pasts or of previous failures to notice that something was not quite right with Stalin. "Coming clean" earned them superstar status, although one inversely proportionate to the substance of their writing . . . or its novelty.

Compound these trends with the Socialist party's disappointing tenure in office in the early 1980s, and it is easy to see how the role of the Anti-Sartre was awarded to Raymond Aron (and to Aron's ghost following his death, shortly after that of Sartre). Actually, contraposing Sartre and Aron has been a staple of the French intellectual world for decades. Their personal histories invite comparison. Both began as students together at the elite *Ecole normale supérieure,* with both intrigued by contemporary German philosophy. The story is now legendary of how Aron introduced Sartre, then obsessed with the questions of freedom and contingency, to phenomenology in a café by suggesting that through it one could even philosophize about the apricot cocktail before them.[2] They remained friends until politics drove them far apart in the post–World War II era, Sartre embracing an ever more leftist posture, Aron a liberal one.

Aron was the calm liberal thinker, Sartre an intellectual hand grenade. This is how Etienne Barilier would have it in *Les Petits Camarades: Essai sur Jean-Paul Sartre et Raymond Aron,* and he is far from alone in this characterization. Quoting Simone de Beauvoir's statement that "Sartre lived only to write," Barilier tells us that Aron "lived only to think." It is striking that Annie Cohen-Solal makes virtually the same point in her overwhelmingly sympathetic biography of Sartre. He was "the mad inventor," she tells us, while Aron was "methodical, rational and prudent." For Barilier, the dividing line was already present when the two were schoolmates in the 1920s: "The madness for writing, and the passion of reflecting, the madness to create and the passion of understanding. At this age, already, the distance between the creator and the critic, the distance between he who lives for an idea (or for a vision) and he who lives for ideas is revealed. In Sartre the power of intuition takes the place of reason; Aron, always, wants to safeguard reason." If you had radical sympathies in the 1960s, you are obviously supposed to draw some sober conclusions.

Aron was, after all, the champion of a French version of the "end of ideology" thesis. In contrasts between his "ideas" and Sartre's "idea" we can see this thesis reinvented for a political conjuncture in which an increasingly chaste Socialist party, having failed to transform France, was compelled to rule in "cohabitation" with the neo-Gaullist right. It also expresses a post-1960s quest for a neoliberal/anticommunist consensus that might be an alternative to all radicalisms and their diverse assumptions, and a corresponding intellectual drift, following the decline of Marxism, structuralism, and existentialism, toward doubting the coherence or efficacy of generalized theory.

Yet fifty thousand people showed up at Sartre's funeral in 1980, and now we've a flood of Sartre literature whose inspiration is surely not solely scholastic. Again: why the power of his presence and absence, even for those who have legitimate problems with his philosophy? This is what one would have most liked to discern from the new studies of him, particularly the biographical ones.

A Sartre biography must grapple with an intellectual whose writings, both fictional and nonfictional, endlessly asked what he might know of others' lives and his own. Sartre was especially concerned with an individual's early years. In his autobiography, *The Words,* he states that "the big event" of his life, which "gave me freedom," was the death of his father

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not long after his birth. "I have no superego." Consequently he mischievously tells us that he had "a most incomplete" Oedipus complex with nobody to challenge possession of his young mother, with whom he had, in fact, a loving, almost incestuous relationship. Indeed, throughout his adult life she was the sole person who did not address him simply as "Sartre." Even de Beauvoir did not call him "Jean-Paul." And the man whose play *No Exit* declares that "Hell is other people," was addressed always by the formal "vous" in French and never the intimate "tu."

"I have no superego." The comment is only partly ironic. *Being and Nothingness* severely criticized Freudianism as a form of "Bad Faith," a self-deception we know to be a self-deception. Psychoanalysis, Sartre insisted, uses the idea of the unconscious to avoid questions of human freedom and responsibility. He speaks, in *The Words,* of his youthful persona in these terms: "I keep creating myself; I am the giver and the gift. If my father were alive, I would know my rights and my duties. He is dead and I am unaware of them." But he did have problems with his overpowering grandfather—"He so resembled God the father that he was often taken for Him"—and, later, his stepfather.

It is hardly surprising that Sartre's writings are obsessed with the ideas of freedom, self-creation, and contingency on one hand and the genesis of the individual on the other. His early short story "The Childhood of a Leader" probes the youth of a future fascist; in his play *The Flies* the stepfather and mother are murdered; his *Baudelaire* describes the relation between the poet, his mother, and his stepfather in terms that sound strikingly like Sartre's own, and then pursues an existential assay into Baudelaire's life choices; Sartre's *Saint Genet* is about an orphan who chooses his homosexuality and identity as a thief after Others see him as such.

Sartre had definite ideas when it came to biographical writing, and he knew well that what one knows of a man or a woman depends on what questions one raises. Flaubert "is objectified in his books," Sartre writes in *The Family Idiot*. He queries: "What then is the relationship of the man to his work?" He insists that it is essential "to set out with a problem" when seeking to know an individual. He quotes a letter in which Flaubert states, "It is by the sheer force of work that I am able to silence my innate melancholy. But the old nature often reappears, the old nature that no one knows, the deep, always hidden wound." Sartre, author of a novel named *Melancholia*—renamed *Nausea* by his publisher—asks what this means: "Can a wound be innate? . . . What we must try to understand is the origin of the wound. . . ."

Why be interested in the wounded origins of a fellow from Rouen named Gustave? Not only because he wrote *Madame Bovary*. Sartre declared *The Family Idiot* to be the sequel to, and to have the same subject matter as, *Search for a Method*. The latter text was his introduction to the theoretical synthesis of Marxism and existentialism that he pursued in the late 1950s and that eventually became the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. At its center was the claim that Marxism *needed* existentialism in order to return the human dimension to itself. All too often, he complained, Marxism was ensnared in a reductionism that "situates but no longer ever discovers anything." Its adherents, for example, were undoubtedly right to say that Paul Valéry was a petit bourgeois intellectual. But not every petit bourgeois intellectual becomes Paul Valéry. Thus, in his Flaubert study, Sartre insists with a Hegelian echo that

> a man is never an individual; it would be more fitting to call him a *universal singular*. Summed up and for this reason universalized by his epoch, he in turn resumes it by reproducing himself in it as singularity. Universal by the singular universality of human history, singular by the universalizing singularity of his projects, he requires simultaneous examination from both ends.

From both ends. This, surely, is what any biographer of someone so apparently singular as Sartre, should have learned from Sartre himself. And this is where Cohen-Solal's overwritten book fails. Not that this author hasn't done exhaustive research; not that she doesn't add many new and interesting facts to

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our knowledge of Sartre. What her *Sartre: A Life* lacks is an integrated—indeed, fully digested—sense of Sartre the thinker.

This is most evident in her inability to decide quite where philosophy and literature fit into Sartre's life. In one place she informs us that for him "philosophy will always be a convenient, principal tool and a means of access to fiction"; then she tells us three hundred pages later that "philosophy had always occupied first place in the hierarchy of Sartrean values." She characterizes *Being and Nothingness* as "a key to Sartre's entire life and works"; yet her reader will find only a fleeting few paragraphs about it, which is more than she gives to some of Sartre's other seminal works, like *What Is Literature?*

One does not expect a biographer to supply a detailed discourse on Sartre's philosophy. But without an adequate perspective on the content of his thought, one can't really know Sartre the man. The Sartre we are left with is, first and foremost, Sartre the star. Ronald Hayman's *Sartre: A Biography,* which appeared almost simultaneously with the English version of Cohen-Solal, at least tries to give a comprehensive picture of its subject. Unfortunately, it is a rather pedestrian account with some excruciating prose, and it is significantly dependent on the earlier French edition of Cohen-Solal.

Sartre's original existential project was a reverse Christianity. Rather than God becoming man, Sartre's man is a "useless passion" ever striving and failing to be God. Where Hegel's Absolute Spirit found its highest expression in philosophy, art, and religion, the atheist Sartre was to objectify himself in philosophy, literature, and, later, politics. Anna Boschetti's study is especially concerned with how Sartre's "polyphonic virtuosity" established his intellectual preeminence. The insights she provides—some quite penetrating—emerge despite a rather unsatisfactory methodological apparatus adopted from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Briefly, for her, Sartre's "enterprise" flourished because he successfully deployed his intellectual "capital" in various "fields"—each of the latter being a "system of social relations which functions according to a logic of its own" and is thus characterized by a "symbolic economy."

If we put this terminology aside (together with the theoretical implications of presenting Sartre as something akin to a capitalist entrepreneur), what we find is that as of the 1930s French cultural life presumed an unbridgeable opposition between "imaginative," "creative" writers and professors of philosophy. Zola declared that "anyone who has bathed in the air of the *Ecole normale"*—the most prestigious educational institution for aspiring philosophers—"is impregnated with it for life. The brain maintains the stale and mouldy odor of the professoriat. . . . If you sow professors you will never reap creators. . . ." Sartre, however, was both creator and professor, novelist-playwright and *normalien,* author of *No Exit* and *Being and Nothingness*. And then, in the late 1940s, he becomes editor of *Les Temps modernes* and apostle of freedom and "commitment" in a France remaking itself after the Nazi occupation. He was, as is often noted, the total intellectual, a "field" unto himself.

Although Cohen-Solal declares Sartre's philosophy to be a means of access to fiction, Boschetti is much more to the point when she characterizes *Nausea* as a "spontaneously Husserlian novel"; she quotes Sartre's thanks to the critic E. Jaloux for analyzing it "as a phenomenological experiment, a work of fiction which gives insight into essence." Sartre's generation, which matured in the 1930s, has been called that of the "Three Hs" in French philosophy—Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger. His thought is suffused with the distinctive, often tortuous, categories and language of these German thinkers (who became the philosophical rage in Paris at this time due to an influx of foreign academics, many in flight from Hitler or Stalin). Hence, *Being and Nothingness,* which in one way or another is essential to understanding all of Sartre's works, bears the subtitle "An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology." Daunting as these words may seem, a sense of what they implied is elemental to a coherent grasp of Sartre's projects and view of the world.

Phenomenology, as formulated by Edmund Husserl, had a preoccupation very close to that

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of dialectical thinking: the relation between subjectivity and objectivity. It represented a response to the identity crisis central European philosophy underwent in the latter half of the nineteenth century. After the dramatic scientific advances of that era, speculative philosophy—generally identified with Hegelianism—seemed . . . well, very speculative. Consequently, an often simplistic notion of "objectivity" seated itself on the epistemological throne and subjugated questions of human consciousness to its imperium. In the first decades of the twentieth century in France, this tendency was manifested particularly in various experimental, behaviorist, and gestalt theories of psychology, all of which seemed to challenge the place of philosophy. Young Sartre devoted much effort to criticizing them along with the dominant trends of contemporary French academic philosophy—Henri Bergson's "vitalism," Léon Brunschwicg's neo-Kantianism, and the ever-present positivism that sought in natural science the model for all forms of inquiry. Phenomenology seemed to provide an alternative to all of them.

Briefly, Husserl sought to go beyond the traditional separation of "subject" and "object" by insisting that consciousness was "intentional," that is, always *of* something. Philosophy could become a "rigorous science" by providing a method to describe the essences of "phenomena" (that is, of the objects of our consciousness). Rather than debating (yet again!) whether or not objects "exist" independently of our consciousness of them, Husserl "bracketed" this issue—he "bracketed existence"—and proposed instead that the task was to describe those features without which an object perceived would not be that object. These "essences," he claimed, are "seen" or "intuited" by the phenomenologist.

Sartre, a physically unattractive man who was blind in one eye, was ever obsessed with "seeing." In *The Words* he tells us that his grandfather once declared that "it's not enough to have eyes. You must learn to use them." The old man then recounted how Flaubert placed young Maupassant before a tree and gave him two hours to describe it. "I therefore learned to see," is Sartre's comment. As existentialist, "the Look of the Other" was to be philosophically crucial to him; and Antoine Roquentin, in *Nausea*'s most famous passage, confronts "contingency" and "existence" as he looks at a chestnut tree. Phenomenology was a descriptive method, and description is a vital link between Sartre's differing modes of cultural production. Although he later sharply distinguished "literary" from "philosophical" prose, no reader of *Being and Nothingness* or his fiction can fail to notice the centrality of description in his work, or his remarkable descriptive powers.

But unlike Husserl, Sartre refused to "bracket existence," because it was what Antoine Roquentin called "the very paste of things." "Existence" was paramount to Sartre's pursuits, in part because his phenomenology was transformed by reading Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Heidegger's preoccupation was ontology, that is, the philosophy of "Being." He was, as George Steiner has noted, "literally overcome by the notion of 'is' . . . , a man inexhaustively astonished by the fact of existence, and haunted by the reality of the *other* possibility, which is nothingness. . . ." Sartre, using Hegelian terminology for his own purposes, will make this issue his own by juxtaposing two realms of existence: "Being-in-Itself" and "Being-for-Itself."

As a phenomenologist he saw his task as describing, not defining or deducing, "Being." Being-in-Itself simply is; it is opaque matter. Consciousness—Being-for-Itself—is pure activity, "nothingness," always directed toward something else. It is "presuppositionless" and "translucent" like water—otherwise it would impose on the revelation of the intended object. Consequently, it can have no identity with itself because it *is always of something*. (Thus it is that Sartre's *voyeur* is conscious of what he sees through the keyhole until he perceives himself observed by the Other; it is then that consciousness becomes "reflective" and the self becomes an object for one's own consciousness as well.) What first is revealed to consciousness, for Sartre, are "brute" existences, which are acted on, are "negated" (i.e., changed from what they are) by the For-Itself. Sartre's language easily throws the reader who doesn't grasp that for him "nothingness" and

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"negation" have what, in common parlance, would be positive connotations.[3]

In this context Sartre's radical notion of freedom as a primordial category of human being becomes intelligible. Since Being-for-Itself is his defining characteristic, man is never one with himself. He has no "essence preceding his existence." He creates himself, freely surging toward a future in the projects he chooses, whether he admits to choosing or not. In the celebrated phrase of *Being and Nothingness*, we are "condemned to be free," we always make choices in any given situation, and are always responsible for our acts. The question for Sartre was whether or not we choose "authentically" or in "bad faith," and it was a double-edged philosophical sword. On one hand, the notions of authentic free choice, responsibility, and bad faith were his reply to the Freudian theory of the unconscious. On the other, his stress on consciousness aimed to reject crude materialism and positivism while not ignoring "brute existence."

Sartre's arguments were, of course, open to diverse criticisms. Early on de Beauvoir, his closest philosophical and personal comrade, asked him what exactly Sartrean freedom meant for a woman in a harem. Herbert Marcuse, in a 1948 review of *Being and Nothingness,* chastised existentialism for hypostatizing "specific historical conditions of human existence into ontological and metaphysical characteristics." Noting that Sartre's treatise, with its emphasis on freedom, could appear in France under German occupation, Marcuse commented that

> the essential freedom of man, as Sartre sees it, remains the same before and during and after the totalitarian enslavement of man. For freedom is the very structure of human being and cannot be annihilated even by the most adverse conditions: man is free even in the hands of the executioner. Is this not Luther's comforting message of Christian liberty?

Marcuse's comment is at once quite potent, and not entirely fair. Although ahistoricity fundamentally flaws Sartre's early existentialism, he did always speak of freedom enacted "in situation." On the other hand, Sartre's recognition of the cogency of criticism from the left would be one factor bringing him to an existential Marxism in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* a decade and a half after *Being and Nothingness*. Parallel developments can be seen in his literary endeavors: from the phenomenological and existential pursuits of *Nausea* (1938), he turned to his famous theory of committed literature in the late 1940s, and by 1961 declared, "I have served a slow apprenticeship . . . I have seen children die of hunger. In front of a dying child, *Nausea* has no weight."

The *Critique* focuses on scarcity as the historical root of human conflict, and sees not just nature as thwarting human purposes, but the realm of the "practico-inert," that is, the products of human labor turned against their makers. Sartre reinvents in Marxist form the opposition between Being-for-Itself and Being-in-Itself as that between "praxis" and the "practico-inert," the "domination of man by worked matter." "History has two principles," he states in the awkward prose of the unfinished second volume of the *Critique,* "one is the action of men, which is all and nothing at once and which, without the inertia of things, would be immediately expunged [*s'effacerait*] like a volatile spirit; the other is inert matter, within the agents themselves and outside of them, which sustains and deviates the whole practical edifice having, moreover, given rise to it at the same time [*qui soutient et dévie tout l'édifice pratique en même temps, d'ailleurs, qu'elle en a suscité la construction . . .*]."

Although Sartre's sympathies had always been vaguely leftist, the war, he later recounted, taught him the impossibility of non-commitment. This, and the enormous strength of the French Communist party (PCF) after the war, were what initially compelled him to grapple with Marxism seriously. And his enormous import forced the Communists to grapple with him too: although his ideas may have been expressed most elaborately in a dense tome that is not easily approached—*Being and Nothingness*—he also presented his existentialism in virtually every creative form available to a writer, with the exception of

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poetry. Moreover, Sartre was a public figure with an influential journal, *Les Temps modernes* (founded in October 1945), at his disposal. In it he expounded the necessities of political engagement and making political choices.

In the immediate postwar period, Sartre's relation with the PCF was tense, beginning with the slander campaign it waged against the memory of the writer Paul Nizan. Sartre rose in defense of his friend, who had broken ranks with the Communists after the Stalin-Hitler pact, died at Dunkerque and was now branded "a filthy dog in the pay of the Ministry of the Interior" by PCF leader Maurice Thorez. More important, Sartre played a very visible role in founding a potential rival to the PCF, the short-lived *Rassemblement démocratique révolutionnaire*. The RDR presented itself as a political movement seeking a "Third Way" that would be socialist but not Stalinist or reformist.

Maintaining Thorez's high level of discourse, PCF intellectuals called Sartre "a hyena with a fountain pen" and the author of "the metaphysics of shit." (These remarks are equaled only by the right-wing vulgarities of Céline, who responded to *Anti-Semite and Jew* by inquiring of Sartre's appearance, "those bulbous eyes . . . that hook . . . that slobbery sucker: is it a cestode?") Sartre's philosophical emphasis on the For-Itself was clearly inimicable to the crude materialism that underlay official Stalinist ideology, a point made especially clear by Sartre's 1946 essay "Materialism and Revolution." ("The materialist thinks that by denying his subjectivity he has made it disappear. . . .")

When Sartre made a procommunist volteface in 1952, he startled many friends and engendered bitter public acrimony with the likes of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Albert Camus, and Claude Lefort, among others. The result was his isolation from the independent French left. "Sartre was neither a Marxist nor a communist when most intellectuals of 1945 were either one or the other," Cohen-Solal observes, "This was the first missed rendezvous. He moved toward the party in 1952, precisely at the moment when the very same generation of intellectuals was beginning to move away from it. This was the second missed rendezvous."

He always insisted that one *must* choose. Following the collapse of the effort to build a "Third Way" through the RDR, in the McCarthyistic environment of the Cold War, he did just that. The immediate impetus was the French government's ruthless repression of the PCF during and after the anti-Ridgeway demonstrations of 1952. In the simplicity of his response, however, one might say that his theory of engagement backfired: Sartre apparently concluded that there were only two political options.

Sartre's literary and philosophical treatments of Marxism generally display an intelligence that proved woefully wanting in his tortured dealings with French Communists and the USSR. For example, he once banned production of his play *Dirty Hands*, which poses some of the most astute and difficult questions to communists, on the grounds that it was too useful to anticommunists. Ironically Hoerderer, the tough but humanist Communist leader in the play, is one of the few truly attractive and politically compelling characters in Sartre's theater—though he could never be mistaken for Maurice Thorez or Jacques Duclos.

To turn away from a Western anticommunist hysteria is one thing; to embrace the east of Stalin—whose very filthy hands were still very busy in 1952—is quite another. That these were not, in fact, the only possibilities before him is proved quite simply by his own angry break with the PCF in 1956 after the invasion of Hungary. "It is not, nor will it ever be possible to resume any connection with the PCF," he declared. "Each sentence they utter, each action they take is the culmination of lies and sclerosis. . . ." Sartre then took to his own path, attempting his synthesis of Marxism and existentialism in the *Critique*. "The *Critique* is a Marxist work written against the Communists," he declared in a 1975 interview; "I felt that true Marxism had been completely twisted and falsified by the Communists." He added, interestingly enough, that he no longer thought "exactly the same thing." In fact, the *Critique* tended to see the evolution of the

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USSR in terms of possibly reparable deviations from the socialist project. It was only after the invasion of Czechoslovakia that Sartre cast off "reformist illusions about this type of regime. The machine cannot be repaired; the peoples of Eastern Europe must seize hold of it and destroy it." Still, in the 1975 interview he reiterated his belief that during the Cold War "the Communists were right. The USSR—despite all the mistakes we know it made—was nevertheless being persecuted."

Those who would exorcise Sartre's intellectual specter find in his fellow-travelling—he never joined the party—an obvious means of discrediting him. He provided them with ample ammunition. It is noteworthy, however, that the same standards of (continuous) historical blame are not maintained when it comes to the bedfellows of French imperialism, and particularly the murderous campaign in Algeria, which Sartre fervently opposed. One suspects that the real issue is Sartre's refusal to renounce radicalism. Had he 'fessed up (as all good "New Philosophers" and neoconservatives do) he would be praised for his "honesty."

Aron, interestingly enough, was more sophisticated than his contemporary epigoni. For all his criticisms of Sartre—which were plentiful—he was still able to state in his *Marxism and the Existentialists* that had he been writing in America, he "would probably devote more time to denouncing the anti-Communist obsession than . . . to dispelling the illusions of 'liberals' attracted by Marxism." Ironically, one of Sartre's last public appearances, in June 1979, was with Aron in behalf of the Vietnamese boat people.

It was during the Algerian war, when he was the very embodiment of the engaged intellectual and was writing the *Critique*, that Parisian intellectual trends began moving against Sartre. "Structuralism" had come on the horizon; its dominance would consolidate as France settled into the post-Algerian Gaullist stability of the Fifth Republic. Its presuppositions—even when taking Marxist guise in PCF philosopher Louis Althusser—were fundamentally at odds with those of Sartre, and its "scientific" pretensions probably reminded him of all he had revolted against in the 1930s.

Structuralism's popularity was propelled, perhaps more than anything, by the publication, in 1955, of Claude Lévi-Strauss's remarkable quasimemoir *Tristes tropiques*. The renowned anthropologist in fact had an established relation with *Les Temps modernes*. (The interaction between Sartre's journal and professional anthropology is largely the focus of Howard Davies's *Sartre and "Les Temps modernes,"* a valuable study written, unfortunately, with specialists alone in mind.) If Lévi-Strauss—later a fierce critic of Sartre's *Critique*—provided an immediate impetus for structuralism's rise, it was linguistics that provided its philosophical foundations, particularly the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. His renowned *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) rejected the "diachronic" (historical, evolutionary) approach to the study of language for a "synchronic one," that is, one that looked at language as a structured systemic whole. The focus was on *la langue*, language as a meaningful system of signs, rather than on historically placed expressions of it in acts of speech (*la parole*, the spoken word). Similarly, Lévi-Strauss looked at cultural phenomena as meaningful systems of signs; myths, for example, were studied and compared by him as languages might be on the structural level of codes. On this basis, he postulated universal structures of the unconscious.

Due to such modes of thought, structuralism was identified as a "theoretical antihumanism," a rejection of any emphasis on the development and unfolding of humanity's potentialities, accomplishments, and miseries as an organizing principle in the analysis of history and social life. For a theoretical antihumanism it is the structural system that counts, and men and women at best play roles in it. The key is synchrony, not genesis, *la langue*, not *la parole*, the code, not the message.

We see parallel preoccupations in the work of the rising intellectual stars of the 1960s such as Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, and Jacques Lacan (although they often declined the "structuralist" appellation). Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses* (literally, "Words and

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Things," though translated into English as *The Order of Things*) argued that "the fundamental codes of a culture—those governing its language, its schemes of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of practices—establish for every man . . . the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home." Foucault focused on how the study of language, wealth, and nature in the "Classical Age" (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) was encoded in an *epistēmē*, a "grid" conditioning the conceptual possibilities of knowledge, which differed from those of the Renaissance and the modern periods.

Althusser assaulted the "subjectivism" of "humanist" and Hegelian versions of Marxism that had gained increasing currency in France due to theorists like Henri Lefebvre, Roger Garaudy, Lucien Goldmann, and, of course, Sartre himself. More than anything else, Althusser's target was the idea that Marxism saw in history the story of humanity's self-development. On the contrary, insisted Althusser, history was to be seen in terms of structures, without "man" or "humanity" as its center. "Man" was derided as a nebulous notion transcended by Marx when he formulated a true "science" of social formation and history. Men play roles and have various functions within different structures (the relations of production, for instance), and it is with these that a science of history must concern itself, not "man"—just as Saussure turned to *la langue* rather than *la parole* and Lévi-Strauss to the code rather than the message. Goldmann once complained that Althusser asserted "the existence of structures within history without relation to human activity."

Which, of course, makes for great difficulties in explaining historical change. Who or what does it? Herein was what immediately set Sartre apart from structuralism; indeed it was the same type of issue that alienated him from deterministic types of Marxism some two decades earlier. For Sartre the question was how to grasp history as "totalization without a totalizer," that is, as a process in which the individualized, antagonistic actions of human beings compose an intelligible whole.

The third rendezvous was missed. If, in the mid-1940s, French intellectuals moved toward Marxism and communism when Sartre did not; if the next decade saw them moving from while he moved toward Marxism and communism; then once French intellectuals turned more and more to structuralism and synchronic analysis in the 1960s, relegating "the question of the subject"—that is, of human agency—to an increasingly functional explanation, Sartre was moving toward history with a vengeance, albeit a vision of history conditioned by his own—remolded—notions of the subject and freedom. At the moment when linguistic analysis began to provide the point of departure for so many French intellectuals, Sartre was completing a decade of study of the French revolution and nineteenth century France for his *Critique* and the Flaubert project.

The structuralist overemphasis on synchrony could not but be at odds with Marxism's focus on history and historical action and certainly with a Sartrean Marxism. His notion of freedom—even a freedom now within *historical* "situation"—cannot easily make peace with an antihumanist theoretical paradigm. More difficult to reconcile is Sartre's notion of "translucent" consciousness—an outward-directed "nothingness" intending its object—with the limits structuralists placed on human comprehension because of its structuring by the medium of language.

The question of Freud highlights these issues vividly. In the 1960s Freud's stature grew in France as never before, especially because of the impact of Jacques Lacan. The latter's peculiar Freudianism was indebted to structuralism in its fundamental assertion that the unconscious is structured like a language. Sartre had a love-hate relation with Freud throughout his life. He was forever preoccupied with issues central to those of psychoanalysis—especially the individual's early development—but *Being and Nothingness* argued forcefully for an existential approach that saw Freudian recourse to the unconscious as a type of Bad Faith rooted in a flight from individual responsibility for choices freely made. For structuralists, as for Freudians, neither language nor consciousness is translucent, and

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what encodes them is not to be explained first and foremost by historical methodology. If such were to be the Left Bank vogues, Sartre had to be on the outs.

In a fundamental way, his questions were not theirs. Take the issue of language itself. Sartre's 1944 essay "Departure and Return" is contemptuous of those who would treat language as something anonymous: ". . . words are thrown on the table, killed and cooked like dead fish." In Sartre's mind, "for there to be a problem of language, the Other must first be assumed." In the over eight hundred pages of book one of the *Critique*, language gets all of two pages. Here he avers that words "carry the project of the Other into me and carry my own projects into the Other." As such, Sartre would have to reject a paradigm in which words carry the project not of the Other or myself, but of language itself, as in structuralism. The question of the subject is not there; hence there can be no dialectic, no history.

For Sartre, on the other hand, "language as the practical relation of one man to another is *praxis*. . . ." He would have agreed with Trotsky, who, echoing a famous passage in Goethe's *Faust*, once criticized the Russian Formalists by declaring, "They believe that 'In the beginning was the Word.' But we believe that in the beginning was the deed." What interested Sartre in language paralleled what interested him in freedom: How does a living speaker in a situation use language? How does a human being in a given situation make choices? His response to those who approached language primarily as an autonomous structure imprisoning human discourse was, as Peter Caws has pointed out, to insist that it was precisely here that the challenge to the writer and his style was located.[4]

The historical and political preoccupations of *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* can be seen, at least in part, as an extension of this perspective. They, too, illustrate what distinguished Sartre from his philosophical competitors in the 1960s. The *Critique*'s first volume sought to demonstrate how the "dialectic of history" rested on the dialectical praxes of individuals. This took particularly acute form in a description of how a "series" of individuals, each isolated, self-contained, and potentially a rival for the Others (and all of whom may be playing various roles in a given structure), becomes a "Group-in-Fusion" through "the unity of common *praxis*," the sharing of a common project enabling them to transcend their initial situation through action in history. Sartre's most potent example is the storming of the Bastille.

By July 1789, the people of Paris had suffered considerably, he says, but they lived as resigned individuals. Despite occasional outbursts, theirs was, in Sartre's words, a "serial behavior falsely presenting itself as individual virtue." But under the pressures of that famous summer—the threats from the king, his encircling army, and the militias—an apocalyptic moment arrived in which individuals no longer simply needed weapons to protect themselves. Instead, individual praxes, the For-Itselves, were synthesized in a moment of freedom and reciprocity in which each Other's project became their own. The people of Paris revolted against the king and were transformed from powerless seriality into a Group-in-Fusion; the famous arsenal was stormed. It is precisely this type of historical moment that grid-bound structuralism, even Marxist structuralism, couldn't explain. The same might be said about that Group-in-Fusion known as the May Movement of 1968—a movement Sartre championed.

In *The Savage Mind*, published two years after the *Critique*, Lévi-Strauss accused Sartre of turning history into a myth. He argued that "whatever its value (which is indisputable) historical knowledge has no claim to be opposed to other forms of knowledge as a supremely privileged one." But whatever the value of Lévi-Strauss's structural methodology, its inability to account for historical transformation and historical concreteness is surely its fundamental flaw. It is instructive, in this regard, to contrast Lévi-Strauss's passing, though revealing, comments on the novelist and revolutionary Victor Serge in *Tristes tropiques* with Sartre's on Valéry and Flaubert.

Lévi-Strauss recounts how, while escaping from Marseilles at the outbreak of World War II, he found himself aboard the same ship as

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Serge. He perceived the latter as something akin to an asexual "prim and elderly spinster" whose "cultural type" was as suitable to a Burmese Buddhist monk as to a comrade of Lenin. The refugee standing before Lévi-Strauss became a stimulus to look beyond what was manifest—a particular, historically placed man—to the "more subtle correspondences between individuals and *the parts they play*" (my emphasis).

Now, it may be possible and even worthwhile to correlate "cultural types" in one way or another. But consider: Serge was a revolutionary and a writer. He was, at various times, an anarchist, a quasi-Bolshevik, and an anti-Stalinist, antitotalitarian libertarian socialist; his very engaged life took him from the barricades of the Barcelona syndicalist uprising in 1917 and besieged Petrograd during the Russian civil war two years later to persecution by Stalin and flight from fascism. No familiarity with his endlessly eventful, colorful, tragic, and turbulent story—i.e., with the historical Serge—could allow that he was of a "type" with a spinster or a monk. If he appeared stoic when his path crossed that of Lévi-Strauss, it was certainly because Serge was then a political man in defeat.

Lévi-Strauss's characterization of Serge is, in short, reductionist. Which is just what Sartre attacked Marxists for—although in their case the target was economic determinism—when he declared in *Search for a Method* that to say that Paul Valéry was a petit bourgeois intellectual is uninteresting. What is interesting is how a petit bourgeois intellectual becomes Paul Valéry. The structuralist Lévi-Strauss's Victor Serge is the reductionist Marxist's Paul Valéry. Hence, Sartre's claim that *The Family Idiot* was the sequel to *Search for a Method*. And hence the importance of Sartre's declared program—whether achieved or not—for his Flaubert study: to see the author as a universal particular.

In his 1927 polemic *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, the French critic Julien Benda chastised the European intellegentsia for its engagement with politics, especially nationalism, to the detriment of an appropriately disinterested role. In his 1965 "Plea for Intellectuals," Sartre referred to an "intellectual" as "someone who meddles in what is not his business." He pointed out that it was the anti-Dreyfusards who first made pejorative use of the term; the fate of the hapless Jewish captain, they claimed, was within the purview of military tribunals, not that of writers.

Sartre was partly wrong. The Voltaires, Zolas, and Sartres are exceptions. The historical rule has more often than not approximated Benda's ideal, and not only in France. Moreover, engaged intellectuals have by no means always been of the left. Indeed, the post-1960s period seems to have yielded an intellectual world in which "revolutions" take place in the realm of "litcrit" alone; the practitioners of such "revolutions," on both sides of the Atlantic, are so lost in their texts that they have departed this world. Sartre, consciously, went from literature to politics, and now it seems that it is the reverse that is done, sometimes without noticing and often by creating a superstructure of buzzwords, which, in the end, don't even tell us much about literature. As Irving Howe has noted, the point appears to be to change not the world, but English (or French) departments.

Toward the end of *The Words* Sartre declared, "I don't mind if my fellowmen forget about me the day after I'm buried. As long as they're alive, I'll haunt them, unnamed, imperceptible, present in every one of them just as the billions of dead who are unknown to me and whom I preserve from annihilation are present in me." He has not been forgotten, and intellectuals who imagine themselves on the left ought always to be unsettled by Sartre's insistence on—as well as his practice of—political engagement. In this vein, it is perhaps one of Sartre's more teasing ontological notions in *Being and Nothingness* that can provide a clue to his afterlife. He spoke there of a *négatité*, a word difficult to translate—"concrete nothing" perhaps conveys its meaning—and grasped best through his own description (which I shall amend slightly).

A young writer goes into a Parisian café to find someone; let's call the latter Jean-Paul. Jean-Paul is absent but the café *is* there before the young writer in its fullness: customers

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drinking, waiters serving the tables, an aroma of smoke and coffee in the air. Jean-Paul, however, is not there; if he were, he would stand out against the background of the café, for the young writer came looking for him, and the café itself is not his concern. Since he expected Jean-Paul's presence, not that of Raymond Aron, Paul Valéry or anyone else, the young writer has brought something to the café: Jean-Paul's absence.

Now it seems that a good many people are looking for Jean-Paul, even though many of them don't much like his philosophy, for reasons good and bad. They haven't found him in the café, that famed office (and stage) of Parisian intellectuals. Instead, they've discovered him in the hallway. Sartre, one might say, is both the *négatité* and the Other of contemporary French—and not only French—intellectual life. □

Notes

[1] See, for example, Etienne Barilier, *Les Petits Camarades: Essai sur Jean-Paul Sartre et Raymond Aron* (Paris: Julliard/L'Âge d'Homme, 1987), 75 FF; Anna Boschetti, *Sartre et "Les Temps Modernes"* (Paris: Minuit, 1985) 89 FF [Now in English as *The Intellectual Enterprise: Sartre and Les Temps Modernes* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988) $32.95]; Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre: A Life* (New York: Pantheon, 1987) $24.95; Howard Davies, *Sartre and Les Temps Modernes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ronald Hayman, *Sartre: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) $22.95. Also, volume 2 of Sartre's *The Family Idiot* has recently been translated by the University of Chicago Press.

[2] According to Simone de Beauvoir. Aron claimed later it was a beer. It is a dispute of relevance only to phenomenologists.

[3] Consequently, the comedian who announced upon Sartre's death that the philosopher had gone "from being into nothingness" got it precisely backward.

[4] For a valuable discussion of Sartre on linguistic concerns, see Peter Caws's *Sartre* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 20–30.

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Jo-Ann Mort

RETURN OF THE SWEATSHOP

Déjà Vu in The Garment Industry

Every year since 1911, union members have assembled in front of a building on Washington Place and Greene Street in New York City on March 25. The building is cloaked in black. A fire engine ladder reaches toward the eighth floor in memory of the women who were trapped there when the Triangle Shirt Waist fire exploded seventy-seven years ago. Today, just blocks away—and, in fact, throughout New York City—sweatshops with similar conditions abound. In the words of one union organizer, another disaster is waiting to happen.

Didn't sweatshops disappear with the organizing success of the garment unions, with federal regulations, with organized opposition to child labor and worker exploitation? In New York City today, is it really possible that sweatshop conditions exist, comparable not only to the turn-of-the-century sweatshops, but to the shops of Taiwan, the Philippines, El Salvador? The answer is: *yes*.

The problem of sweatshop regulation was brought under control in the 1930s and 1940s, and the regulation held up until the early 1970s. But, by then, changes in the industry and a letup on regulations brought sweatshops back to New York City. Even looser regulation during the Reagan years and the flood of low-wage imports—the apparel industry in this country is competing with labor costs as low as twelve cents an hour in the Third World—have intensified the problem.

How big is the problem? It's difficult to document, since sweatshops are illegal, but union officials estimate that there are several thousand in the five boroughs and North Jersey, affecting about 150,000 workers. Concentrations of five hundred shops each have been documented in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.

The enormous increase of imports has not only forced unfair wage competition in the United States, it has led to a severe loss of American garment and apparel jobs and a decline of membership among the two main garment unions, the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU).

In 1969, when the ILGWU had a peak national membership of 450,000, the union could control standards of contractors and manufacturers by stopping work. Today, with under 200,000 workers in the international and greater resistance to curbing imports, the problem of sweatshops increases.

Contractors, owners of the small sewing shops where manufacturers may send their work to be assembled, are less likely to be bound by the union. Manufacturers often contract out work with little knowledge of how that work gets done. In New York, they are not legally responsible for labor and health violations in their contractors' shops.

New immigrants from Korea, China, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Latin American countries—both legal and illegal—are willing to work for low wages and in conditions that are poor by American standards, but much better than in their native lands.

As Joe Danahy, organizing director of the ILGWU, puts it: "Sweatshops are a state of mind." They vary, but a sweatshop usually

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New York City sweatshop, 1987. (Kathleen Foster/IMPACT VISUALS)

means a combination of several things, including piece-rate or payment below the minimum wage, few or no health benefits, unsafe working conditions, mandatory homework, and unregulated working hours. In many cases, there are also violations of child labor laws, no tax withholding, and cash payment or no payment at all, especially when illegal immigrants are involved who have no legal recourse to force payment.

Today, sweatshops are found mainly in major urban areas like Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, and New York. Danahy, however, says he even knows of one in the middle of Iowa, where a third generation of women works for fifty-seven cents an hour.

Today's sweatshops are physically not very different from those of the turn of the century: ventilation is poor; piles of fabric sit near boilers and gas burners; there are no fire exits.

Sweatshops are usually contained entities in a community, with Dominican bosses hiring Dominican workers, Haitians hiring Haitians. The Koreans, although they also hire Korean workers, have begun to hire Hispanics, since many Koreans come to this country via South America where they learn Spanish en route. In these shops, a two-tier system develops, where the Koreans are considered a tier above their Hispanic co-workers.

Yet, although sweatshops are usually clustered in neighborhoods with new immigrants like Washington Heights and Sunset Park in Brooklyn, there are clusters of shops in the garment center, in full view of midtown. They operate in the open, hanging out signs in Spanish, French, or Chinese. Shops in the West Thirties even advertise on street lamps, calling for workers to work day and evening shifts. These tiny sweatshops keep running virtually twenty-four hours a day.

This new glut of sweatshops has given rise to illegal or racketeer "unions," which protect the contractors from the ILGWU or ACTWU. One

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of the more notorious of the illegal unions, Local 1718, United Production Workers, was run by a Williamsburg resident named David Ganz who is currently serving a prison term for embezzlement of funds. The "union" represents about five thousand workers in sixty shops in the area around Williamsburg and Bushwick.

In many cases, without knowing they belonged to a "union," workers at shops "organized" by 1718 had two dollars taken out of each weekly paycheck. They were given flat rates of seven or eight dollars for doctor visits, had no access to grievance procedures, and had no union contract. Some of the senior workers were provided with Blue Cross/Blue Shield benefits by the shop owner to maintain a steady workforce.

Now that Ganz is in jail, and with pressure from the organizing efforts of ACTWU and the ILGWU, 1718 has improved somewhat. "They have a young kid running the union now, filing grievances and running around sounding like Walter Reuther," says the ILGWU's Danahy.

Where there are sweatshops, there is usually industrial homework. "In the middle of the garment center," says ILGWU organizer Katie Quan, "I saw a shop where they were making handloom sweaters with about a dozen Chinese workers. The sweaters were of very high quality, the type to sell in Bloomingdale's for eighty dollars or more. At 5:30 p.m. every day, the workers would leave the shop carrying duffle bags. They were working all day in the shop and all night at home."

A highly publicized example of homework exposed in the last few years was an operation being run by high-priced, trendy designer Norma Kamali, who was fined $10,000 by the New York State Department of Labor for labor violations. Kamali was running sweatshops in workers' homes in Queens and in Washington Heights, with workers earning less than two dollars an hour. The women employed by Kamali would receive assistance from sisters, daughters, neighbors, anyone who came in to help. As a union organizer describes it, "Wherever there is a homework situation, there is sure to be child labor."

Kamali is an exception as a high-priced, high-profile designer using nonunion sweatshop workers. Homework and sweatshop work can't be regulated for quality, which discourages most top designers.

Ironically, on this year's anniversary of the Triangle Fire, the Reagan administration announced new and lenient laws concerning homework. During both terms of this administration, a relaxation of homework laws has been a goal. Union observers say that the homeworkers attached to the illegal shops have increased almost ten times since 1981. "I have never seen a homeworker earn over $2.50 an hour," says Danahy. "I've seen them earn as little as fifty cents an hour or just not get paid at all. They are mostly undocumented workers and don't have bank accounts or legal recourse."

The Reagan administration is already looking at ways to allow homework in high-tech industries. (Union sources say that the force pushing for these changes is George Bush, so a Bush administration could mean more attempts to halt regulation.)

What can be done to do away with sweatshops? Regulatory laws are already on the books, but are largely ignored. In the early Reagan years, sweatshop investigations declined by over 20 percent since the Carter administration. In Reagan's second term the decline has steepened.

In New York, a new state task force has been conducting investigations into abuses. But it has only fifteen investigators, a number much too small to tackle the immense problem.

Assemblyman Frank Barbaro, chair of the State Assembly Labor Committee, has just introduced Governor Cuomo's program bill into the state legislature. This bill would increase the authority of the state to deal with illegalities and is being supported by the unions.

The bill would give the Labor Department the authority to penalize individuals who knowingly assist owners of sweatshops. This makes the manufacturers responsible for their contractors. Already, the New York State Chamber of Commerce and the employers' associations are lobbying against the new bill.

A similar law went into effect in 1981 in

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California. Over 85 percent of the state's manufacturers and contractors have complied with registration. Today, over 90 percent of that state's workers are covered by workers' compensation, and wage violations are greatly reduced.

Without government help, unions can't halt the illegal operations. "These are totally underground operations," says a union official. "If we go in and organize these shops, the supply of work will simply be cut off. They must be shut down for good." □

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THE CITY OF DEALS

Where Greed & Grandiosity Are Destroying the Streets

October 28, 1963 is an important unacknowledged anniversary for the city of New York. On that day, vandals with a court order began to raze Pennsylvania Station more efficiently than their predecessors did the Roman Baths of Caracalla that inspired the prominent New York architect, Charles Follen McKim (1847–1909) at the height of his career. Although the Baths still stand in Rome as ruins, nothing remains of McKim's great neoclassical railroad station that once enclosed a full six blocks—nothing except some of its supporting steel, buried deep under the street. In its place stands Madison Square Garden, a banal drumlike structure that squats on the old monumental site like a discarded trash barrel next to its own office tower.

Years after the old station's rubble was removed to the Jersey wetlands and sculptor Adolph Weinman's huge stone eagles and classical maidens were dumped in the weeds, the "new" Madison Square Garden is itself threatened with demolition. There will be no outcry from preservationists and concerned citizens to save it. But it is worth pausing and considering what kind of city New York has become. Think of Madison Square Garden as its own tombstone, marking its developer's short-lived ambition and greed. It also marks the site of the old station with its grand waiting areas, restaurants, modern steel train sheds, and stairways, a vanished urbanism that used architecture to elevate the living of everyday life. Conceived by Alexander Cassatt, president of the railroad at its dedication in 1910, to be not only a monument to his own success and ambitions but an elegant public place for all New Yorkers, it exists now only in memory.

At a time when Europeans are reconsidering their own architectural heritage and preserving buildings or transforming historically important and aesthetically pleasing works like a deserted railroad station in Paris and a palace in Barcelona, Americans are caught in a mad exchange of property and architecture for cash. In developer Donald Trump's words, they have replaced city building and governance with the "art of the deal." Although an active Landmarks Preservation Commission was formed in the wake of the Penn Station debacle, little progress has been made in protecting the city against its own ruinous ambition endlessly to make itself endlessly over for profit. New York bears the scars of fights lost or half won. Although saved, Grand Central Station was mortally wounded by the Pan Am Tower clamped on top of it. The postwar violation of the Park Avenue cornice line—the consistent and pleasing imaginary plane extending from the buildings' roofline to the street—was complete. Modern architectural classics like Gordon Bunshaft's Lever House and Mies's Seagram Building are rotated away or set back from the street to make themselves more prominent than the grid of which they are an integral part. With names like Lever and Seagram, they and the corporations they invoke became more important than the larger city upon which they are dependent for labor and status. Gridiron planning—a rectilinear layout of streets and building lots—has a long tradition first experimented with in rapidly growing colonial cities like Philadelphia and New York because it offered equal access to land and the "least inconvenience" to development. In 1785, the United States Land Survey made the practice law, culminating with the Homestead

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Before: Pennsylvania Station, main waiting room.
(McKim, Mead & White Collection of Philip A. Donnelly)

Act of 1862. Ideally, the grid is a concrete reminder of equality of opportunity, where no single property is distinguished topographically.

The present clamor for notoriety is not new; it has been a consistent and not necessarily negative part of the city's development, sometimes resulting in remarkable buildings. When associated with a strong plan like Rockefeller Center, the results have enhanced the city. New York architects have always sought a specific identity for their buildings to associate them in the public imagination with the corporation or organization that financed them. Earlier, for example, the Woolworth, Empire State and Chrysler buildings all became instant markers on the cityscape because of their power, beauty, or sheer audacity. By use of setbacks, streamlining, or active commercial level, they made their statements on the skyline without obliterating the street, whereas both Lever House and Seagram were severely withdrawn from Park Avenue, with elevated or removed plaza areas that seriously stigmatized the street, making it suspect.

The best New York architecture of the 1950s employed plans that sharply divided private from public. The street was no longer the mediating element and was replaced by architectural elements that were clearly the property of the building. Public amenities were now part of feudal dispensation, made to appear as if they were provided through corporate largess. More recently, Philip Johnson's AT&T Building did much greater violence to Madison Avenue—a building wildly overscaled with its willfully provocative neofascist entry and alienating public spaces. Initial critical attention was paid only to the relatively benign Chippendale top, but Philip Johnson and John Burgee's first completely postmodern building imposes an imperial scale. The lobby dwarfs the visitor with multistoried Roman arches and oversized heroic sculpture. With its great bulk the building appears to compress the street and to hijack part of Madison Avenue in an open-air arcade, seemingly inspired by the nightmare cityscapes of the painter de Chirico. The destruction of Penn Station and the distrust of the open street have marked New York's paranoid urbanism of the last three decades,

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setting the stage for its recent brutal plans for Times Square and Columbus Circle.

At both projected sites, overly dense or tall buildings will radically alter life on the street by boxing in the areas, malling-up the stores for "security," and by straining existing services. Now at each location there is a rare sense of open space. Because of its low building heights for midtown, Times Square is an unusually spacious and unclaustrophobic area, which debates about its grit and undeniable social problems have tended to obscure. The collection of signs and neon is set to catch the eye and are a welcome relief from the anonymity of the usual rows of office blocks. Irreplaceable legitimate theaters have already been demolished to make way for ugly hotel bunkers, fortified in concrete and set up and away from the pedestrian flow and menace of chance encounters. Johnson and Burgee's plans for four chunky office buildings with FARs (floor to area ratios) as high as forty, or three times as dense as even the most crowded midtown structures, will replace the signs and flash of Times Square in exchange for an official air of normalcy and order. The result will be to push the vice district further west into newly gentrified Clinton, itself only recently known as Hell's Kitchen.

This is not urban planning; it is a temporary form of dispersal where the population as liquid is squeezed out of one container and spilled into another. For years the South Bronx has been the ultimate safety valve through which all the extra liquid flowed. This ad hoc relocation of the city's population (now from Columbus and Amsterdam avenues and the park side of Harlem) has been a constant of urban renewal since the turn of the century and has always presented a hardship for those forced to leave their homes because of increasing property values.

But the relocated are not the only ones to suffer. Residents of the "improved" areas have lost something too—if only in missed vitality and essential human energy. Sixth and Third avenues experienced this change in the 1960s and early 1970s. In particular, Sixth Avenue has been denuded of services and character. The monotonous redundancy of flat-topped towers and sunken plazas, built to achieve zoning variances and now abandoned black holes, gives a ghost town effect when the daily army of office workers has departed. Now Columbus Circle has been singled out for treatment.

Supplanted by the Javits Convention Center, there is no longer any need for the Coliseum to occupy the corner southwest of Central Park. Before there was any consideration to make over the abandoned structure for civic use, the city saw a chance to sell the site for a profit. It was sold to developers for $455 million, although in December 1987 a New York State judge called the sale "null and void."

From the moment Boston Properties showed its designs for Columbus Circle, where the Coliseum now stands, heated debate surrounded the plan. Civic groups attacked the project for its bulk, siting, and lack of harmony with other buildings in the neighborhood. In his opinion Acting Justice Edward H. Lehner declared, "Zoning benefits are not cash items," thus dooming Moshe Safdie's plan for twin 925-foot towers in place of the relatively modest eyesore now on the spot. The Municipal Arts Society, a

After: Pennsylvania Station, 1964. Ruin of main waiting room.
(New York Landmarks Preservation Commission)

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citizen's group that brought the suit in front of Judge Lehner, argued its concerns:

> The proposed building would be one of the three largest buildings in Manhattan. It would cast a shadow up Central Park West past 73rd Street, and across the Park up to and beyond Fifth Avenue; it would strain the ability of the public transit and streets to handle the added traffic; and it would significantly worsen, and in some cases cause, violations of Federal air quality standards.

By the end of last year the project had received two major blows. The financial services company Salomon Brothers was supposed to have been both an investor and the chief tenant of the building, but it withdrew from the project on December 3. On December 7, the Municipal Arts Society won a lawsuit in State Supreme Court that charged that the process by which the developer was chosen for the project was flawed. The city is currently appealing the decision, thereby delaying the project indefinitely. Boston Properties has been forced to discharge its architect and absorb losses of $15 million. This is only a temporary victory for citizen groups still faced with the inevitable development of Columbus Circle.

Enter Donald Trump, who sold the old Penn Central yards to the city for its new convention center. Son of Fred Trump, a successful builder in the outer boroughs, young Donald is the most flamboyant and public of the city's "developers." He and others like Harry Helmsley, Mortimer Zuckerman, and Harry Macklowe are contemporary versions of the old-style robber barons. Today the "city builder" is not an idealist hero like Ayn Rand's Howard Roark, who in *The Fountainhead* blows up a housing project because it compromised his design, or a social advocate like Robert Moses; he is a pure egotist like Trump, who wants to build the "world's tallest building" on the West Side because he believes "tall buildings would make the project more majestic and alluring."

The direct, unapologetic brutality that leveled Pennsylvania Station provides an undeniable clarity for the contemporary builder. Donald Trump has this same directness of purpose. With the help of Tony Schwartz, a contributing editor of *New York Magazine,* the developer has written a memoir, *Trump: The Art of the Deal*, complete with photographs of his favorite projects. His book is an inadvertently revealing self-portrait that tells us much about the state of New York in the 1980s. In it Trump is the shadow of the city's mayor, Edward Koch, who speaks with the same hortatory self-conviction. The two men recently have been reduced to calling each other names over the rebuilding of the public skating rink in Central Park.

Squandering millions of dollars through incompetence, the city had worked unsuccessfully since June 1980 to renovate the Wollman Rink. Trump watched the folly from a window in his triplex year after year as money was poured into this shallow hole. Nothing got done until Trump offered to do it himself. Unconstrained by city regulations and free to hire the best people available, Trump was able to complete the work quickly and under budget. Trump's great mistake in this instance was to dare to be effective and then claim public credit. In doing so, he understandably embarrassed the mayor and brought attention to the sorry plight of the city's management skills, some of which he had directly profited from. They included, among others, the sweet zoning variances and tax abatements that allowed him to build the exotic and dense architectural form of Trump Tower.

The rebuilding of the Wollman Rink reveals in microcosm the decline of public policy and the rise of the entrepreneur. The kind of advocacy planning now being used to reclaim the great buildings of Europe is still negatively associated in this country with the broader anti-urban schemes of Le Corbusier and of Robert Moses during the later years of his career. New York's grossly understaffed City Planning Department and Urban Development Corporation are at best reactive organizations. They are no match for single-minded, well-financed builders like Trump.

Letting Trump take over a city responsibility to rehabilitate its own essential properties was an unintended acknowledgment by the mayor that he had failed the public trust. Setting Trump loose in Central Park was the most obvious image of a city that had achieved a lustrous look of prosperity by selling itself to the highest bidder. The Wollman Rink was just

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one of many rotting New York landmarks. Underground, its extraordinary transit system had deteriorated along with miles of buried pipes, wires, and tunnels. Stumpy columns with encrusted yellow metallic paint, befouled concave tiled walls, and the deafening noise make the subways a more accurate reporter of the city's real condition. Like the potholed streets and dirty parks, the crumbling underground is a soulful counterpoint to the horizontal gentrification along select avenues and the vertical glitz of the new skyscrapers. Trump shrewdly understood the city was ready to deal, allowing all sorts of unnecessary incentives so as not to do the hard work itself. The profit motive usually produces faster results but is not often known to wait for public consensus to develop before acting. By putting on a nice cold shining skin for skating, Trump was doing what he does best. His work in tacit cooperation with the city offered an attractive surface and the illusion of general well-being.

Trump Tower is the developer's own small city. His six levels of malled streets have supplanted all those lost on the south side of Fifty-Seventh Street. "Invariably," he has said, "people comment that the atrium—and the color of the marble particularly—is friendly and flattering, but also vibrant and energizing—all things you want people to feel when they shop: comfortable, but also pumped up to spend money." Trump's streets are different from even the rarefied ones that once existed outside his doors. They are only nominally public, consistent with the trade-off he made to receive zoning concessions. His are not available to New Yorkers twenty-four hours a day like the old ones, but are guarded by a private security force responsible only to him and his high-rent tenants. Trump considers his micro-city potentially available to all. All you need is money to get past the piano player guarding the lobby with concert-style elevator music.

You might not have noticed, but the street is disappearing and the buildings have been turned. Three prominent buildings in midtown—Trump Tower, IBM, and Metropolitan Towers—are rotated at least 45° against the right-angled grid. Instead of a uniform wall of public or commercial space immediately adjacent to the street, they cut like a blade. Stores no longer face out but exist inside secured and climate-controlled malls. Where developers bought zoning variances in the past through setbacks and sunken plazas they now secure them through a commitment to build suburban-like shopping centers. It is one thing to take a rocky potato field on Long Island or an abandoned dirigible base in New Jersey to build a "shopping center" and quite another to decimate systematically life at the city's core by moving the streets inside so they are no longer communal property but are sponsored like art exhibitions or shows on PBS by AT&T, IBM and Mr. Trump.

Donald Trump likes to present himself as a dreamer growing up in Queens. Like Gatsby, he looked toward New York and imagined making his mark there. "I had my eye on Manhattan from the time I graduated from Wharton in 1968," he wrote. "But at that point, the market in the city was very hot, the prices seemed very high, and I was unable to find a deal I liked—meaning a good piece of property at a price I found affordable." In 1968, Donald Trump was twenty-two. The Vietnam War was fully engaged and there were race riots in all of our cities. But unlike Gatsby, the young man never got distracted and "way off his ambitions." He persevered and has become a formidable political force. Like Richard Nixon's, Trump's form of certainty will be attractive to many people as long as he continues to be successful.

New York is being overdeveloped in the name of improvement. While you still can find one, I suggest you go to an unimproved city street. Notice how a good street offers anonymity, a special kind of freedom: a place to walk, carry on and maybe act out a little. Plans like those for Times Square wish to control the necessary disorder of a democratic city. When completed, there won't be much happening outside. Gone with the grit, sleaze, and risk will be any reason to go there. Will you want to celebrate the New Year among the atrium bamboo trees and humming surveillance cameras? "New Year's," you might tell your children, "we used to have a street for that." □

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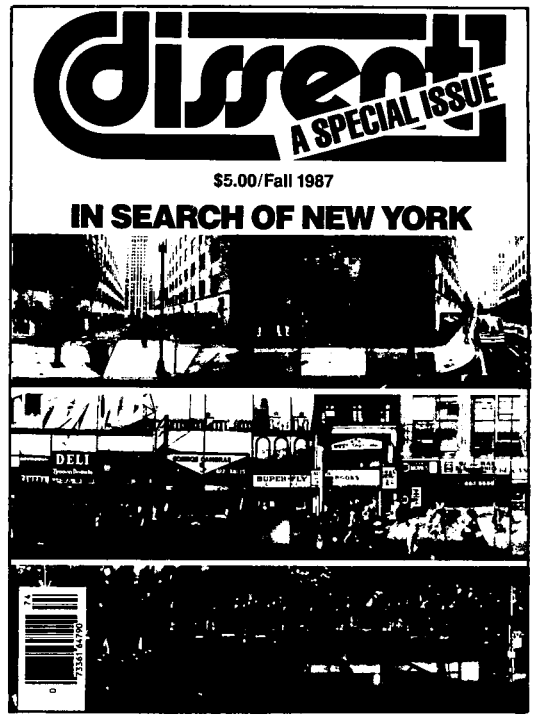

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Irving Howe

SAD EVENTS OF LONG AGO

Those of us who have been alive for seventy years or more are sometimes visited with a strange impulse: to take the middle-aged and the young in a firm grip and urge them to listen to the stories of our lives. We feel ourselves driven to interrupt wedding feasts and other such happy occasions. Of course, we don't suppose our lives to be especially interesting in themselves; but we want to talk about what we have witnessed, at first or second hand, things that are . . . mere history, sad events of long ago. . . .

—J. M. CAMERON, *New York Review of Books*, March 17, 1988

The "strange impulse" about which Professor Cameron speaks has been known to visit some of us who are not yet seventy years old.

A little while back Nikolai Bukharin, Christian Rakovsky, and several other victims of the third Moscow Trial (1938) were "rehabilitated" by a commission of the Gorbachev regime. As usual in the Soviet Union, the result was announced but neither the proceedings nor the membership of this commission was made public. Even the occasional "good thing" done by the Soviet Union is done from above, by party decree.

I gather that those who, half a century ago, fought against Stalin's frameups—the Moscow Trials were only the most visible—should feel gratified. But I do not feel gratified. I see no ground for acknowledging the moral authority of the Soviet dictatorship, even in its somewhat milder Gorbachev version, to "rehabilitate" the victims of Stalin. Let the Soviet government reveal the truth, let it beg forgiveness from Bukharin's widow and other survivors of the victims' families, but that is as far as it has a moral right to go.

There remain, in any case, the names, perhaps even the memories, of a vast number of other victims. As against the particle of truth leaked out in Moscow, vast injustices continue to be hidden. It will be many years, if ever, before the whole story comes out. And who will care? Perhaps a few aging survivors of the anti-Stalinist left, perhaps a few historians of modern Russia, perhaps some young intellectuals in Moscow and Leningrad curious about the fate of their country.

In the late 1930s, when the symmetrical rise of Hitlerism and Stalinism made Max Weber's prediction of a new ice age seem a mere statement of fact, the small and scorned groups of the anti-Stalinist left devoted much of their energy to exposing Stalinism. There was no choice. Nice people, those who had not yet absorbed the "bad news" of our century, would ask why we didn't concentrate our attention on, say, William Randolph Hearst or Congressman Bilbo, why we were so *obsessed* in our attacks on Stalinism. We would muster whatever patience we had in order to explain that the left throughout the world had entered a phase of apocalypse which required—it was an elementary moral obligation—that we make clear that between Stalinism and our idea of socialism there was an unbridgeable gulf. Not obscure "doctrinal differences," but a struggle to the end. As we put it in the language of that time, if the masses of workers and the bulk of the intelligentsia accepted the identification of Stalinism with socialism, then the hope for any decent socialist future was at an end.

There was also an immediate task, and that was to expose the Moscow Trials for the frameups that they were. An elementary moral obligation, but it also had a political purpose: to rescue the vision of socialism, if possible, both from those who, accepting the trials and all they represented, had turned "socialism" into a horror and from those who rejected the trials because they thought the trials proved socialism to be a horror.

This enormous political-intellectual undertaking is far from completed. It is not even clear that it ever will be. It wasn't the rightness of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution or of Bukharin's ideas about the Soviet economy that we were fighting about. They mattered, of course, but only in our more abstruse discussions and leisurely moments. Immediately at stake, as we put it a little melodramatically though not mistakenly, was the honor of socialism. What mattered was to demonstrate that Trotsky, Bukharin, and the other Old Bolsheviks—agree with

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their ideas or not—were not and could not be the "agents of fascism" that Stalin's prosecutors charged.

Today, fifty years later, "everyone" is an anti-Stalinist (including some who might better be called Stalinists). But in 1937? You cannot imagine, unless you lived through those years, how different the political atmosphere was. The bulk of liberal and leftist opinion accepted the Moscow Trials as authentic. Walter Duranty sent slimy dispatches from Moscow to the *New York Times* all but openly sanctioning the Stalin regime. The *Nation* and the *New Republic* printed solemn defenses of the frameups. Segments of conservative opinion, chortling over the obscene spectacle to which the heirs of the October Revolution had been reduced, also lent their approval.

The anti-Stalinist left was weak, isolated. Recent academic studies, recycling the passions of one generation into the dissertations of the next, have paid attention to the "New York intellectuals" around *Partisan Review,* and the sheer accumulation of this material could easily give the false impression that the anti-Stalinist intellectuals were stronger and more numerous than in fact they were. But the simple truth is that a large part of the American intellectual community either accepted the trials—could the Beloved Leader, so wise and genial, be guilty of a hideous frameup? and why did the defendants confess?—or with a fine show of American provincialism declared that all those curious happenings in Moscow weren't any of our business. In a few years we found out that the happenings in Moscow were very much our business.

The battle for public opinion was never quite won by the anti-Stalinist left. Some important writers became its allies: Edmund Wilson, James T. Farrell, John Dos Passos. A few, like Sidney Hook and Meyer Schapiro, had for some years been staunch left-wing critics of Stalinism. Hook especially fought like a tiger. Right or wrong, he always fights hard.

It was only natural that in those days we should have admired Trotsky. He alone stood firm and proud, defying Stalin and his thugs. For a while, some of us supported Trotsky's political ideas, failing to recognize that he had little of value to say about American politics and that his rigid defense of Leninism compromised his critique of Stalinist methods. But at the time this didn't matter very much, since Trotsky's was one of the few voices on the left providing factual and intellectual criticism of the Stalin dictatorship. Looking back now at what Trotsky and others like him—Boris Souvarine, Anton Ciliga, Victor Serge—wrote at the time, I am persuaded that they actually understated the case against Stalinism. No one had a sufficient imagination of disaster to take in the full meaning of the Gulag, though some wrote sharp exposures of it long before Solzhenitsyn. If you read the not-very-brilliant but historically important novel by the Soviet writer Anatoly Rybakov, *Children of the Arbat,* which describes the years 1933-34, when the terror was germinating, you will see that the charges made by the anti-Stalinist left have been utterly vindicated.

But in 1937 or 1938 it was hard to grasp the terribleness of it all. I remember feeling somewhat uneasy after Trotsky published his essay "Thermidor and Anti-Semitism" charging that anti-Semitism had become widespread within the Soviet bureaucracy. I wondered whether "the old man" had gone too far, yielding to personal rage. What?—anti-Semitism in the country we (foolishly) called "a degenerated workers state"? In retrospect it seems obvious that, if anything, he wrote too mildly.

A mere handful, the anti-Stalinist left was scorned and isolated. When the commission to investigate the Moscow Trials came back from hearing Trotsky's testimony in Mexico, a meeting was held in New York to hear its report. One of the speakers was its chairman, John Dewey, the great philosopher who in old age had accepted the thankless task of establishing the truth even though politically he cared almost as little for Trotsky as for Stalin. Yet fewer than a thousand people showed up, mostly old, familiar faces. It would take several decades before the myth of the Beloved Leader could be shattered.

Today of course "everyone" (even, Lord help us, Alexander Cockburn) chimes in against Stalinism. It no longer costs anything. Yet it would remain a point of distinction within the New Left, as also to this day in the pages of the *Nation*, to refuse the label of "anticommunist" (as if there were only one kind!). Look, we would be told, at the dreadful things that have been done in the name of anticommunism. Yes, that is true; but look also at the dreadful things that have been done in the name of anticapitalism.

The "rehabilitations" in Moscow—too little, too late, and far from honest. If Bukharin, then why not—it makes good sense to ask—why not Trotsky? And if Trotsky, who will remember the victims of the Menshevik trial in 1931 (which even Trotsky accepted as valid, though in time he acknowledged his mistake)? And will anyone remember Julian Martov, the left Menshevik who in the early 1920s predicted the disaster awaiting Bolshevism once it eliminated all rival parties?

Well, says a voice, "That's history." And so,

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asks another, "What do you want? A medal?" No, I want to say again that wrong and even foolish as the anti-Stalinist left was on many counts, it was right about one essential question: it was right about Stalinism. And in any case, what I really want is beyond anyone's reach: that all the victims be brought back to life, that the oceans of blood spilled by Stalin be unspilled, that the shame of it all should never have happened.

History is a bully and a cheat. Decent people, knowing its entanglements to be inescapable, still try to keep a certain distance from it. The wrongs of the past are never made good; they are only forgotten. People burdened with memories have a right to be bitter. □

Nicolaus Mills

MADISON AVENUE IN THE REAGAN TWILIGHT

The sun is barely up when the old man taps on the McDonald's door. "We're open in a few minutes, sir," a young countergirl answers. The old man points to the McDonald's cap he is carrying. He is the "new kid" the restaurant has just hired. With a giggle the girl lets him in, and for most of what remains of the commercial, we watch him take orders and serve customers. He is the picture of efficiency and good humor, prompting the girl working beside him to ask, "Are you sure you never did this before?" At the end of the commercial, we follow the old man back to his small, single-story house. "I don't know how they ever got along without me," he proudly tells his wife.

"New Kid," which debuted more than a year ago, is part of a larger slice-of-life series by McDonald's designed to show that it cares about people on both sides of its counters. But behind the smiling faces and happy ending of "New Kid" lies a serious, indeed a grim, premise. In America the elderly cannot get by on their retirement incomes, even when they live modestly. They need extra work, and they are most likely to get that extra work doing the entry level jobs traditionally reserved for teenagers.

It is the kind of hidden message we don't look for in a television commercial. If our fears are to be played upon, we expect, as Vance Packard warned us thirty years ago in *The Hidden Persuaders,* our vanity or sense of prestige will be the advertiser's target. More and more, however, the kind of social message found in McDonald's "New Kid" commercial has become a staple of television advertising. As the Reagan era comes to an end, Madison Avenue is changing. Look closely at what a series of mainstream ads has been saying for the last two years and what emerges is that their underlying subject is an America in which we cannot trust the products we buy, the companies that make them, or our government officials.

American Express "Buyer's Assurance": In this campaign by the prestigious Madison Avenue agency of Ogilvy and Mather, American Express promises to extend the free period of any manufacturer's warranty by doubling it up to an extra year. By charging with your American Express card, you are guaranteed more protection than if you relied solely on the company you bought from. What gives "Buyer's Assurance" its appeal is, however, much more than American Express's genial promise. The commercial is a montage of breaking products that seems like nothing so much as an updated scene from Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*. While "As Time Goes By" plays softly in the background, we watch eleven products (all assembled by American Express so that no brand would stand out) self-destruct. A clock pendulum falls off; a blender sends fruit shooting out its top; a toaster burns one slice of bread and leaves the other white; a washing machine overflows. By the end of sixty seconds, we have seen not just the value of using American Express. We have seen the perils of buying *anything*. "Buyer's Assurance" makes clear there is no avoiding the poor workmanship and shoddy engineering behind all the products in our stores.

The Isuzu "Liars": In this set of six commercials by the West Coast agency of Della Femina, Travisano & Partners of California, the comedy comes from a lampoon of traditional hard-sell car commercials. Typical is the "Liar/Mom" ad. In the ad, salesman Joe Isuzu begins by announcing, "This is my mom, and if everything I say about the four-wheel Trooper II isn't true, may she be struck by lightning." Then Joe starts in with a series of extravagant claims about Trooper II (It can carry a symphony orchestra. It starts at just $10.80.). Each claim is followed by a crack of lightning and a small printed caption that gives the facts about Trooper II. At the end of the commercial Joe's mother goes up in smoke when she is struck by lightning, and viewers are urged to see the "affordable" Trooper II at their Isuzu dealer's. The reverse psychology—a car company so confident that it can parody car commercials—hits home, but so too does the fact that the Trooper II commercial won't break the tone it started with. To the very end the commercial assumes its audience accepts as a given that salesmen and advertisers lie consistently.

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Mita "All We Make Are Great Copiers": In these ads by the newly formed international agency HDM, the aim was to get Mita, the fourth-largest copier in America, better known. In the ads, which improved Mita's dollar growth by over 38 percent between 1985 and 1986, we are shown a series of seemingly absurd incidents. A steam roller crushes a camera, an elephant sits on a vacuum cleaner, a wrecking ball smashes a recorder. After each incident we are told in song what Mita does not make, until at the very end of the commercial a voice-over announces, "Mita. All we make are great copiers." Not only has the viewer been put in a position to know the Mita brand better, he has also been encouraged to conclude that a company that makes only one product is bound to do it better than a company with many. In a decade of mergers and takeovers that idea serves Mita particularly well. But as the Mita commercial ends, we are not simply left with the quaint notion that smaller is better. If we accept the proposition that Mita can outperform its bigger rivals, another conclusion also follows: the more diversified the multinationals that dominate American life become, the less likely they are to care about any single product they turn out.

Meister Brau "It Only Tastes Expensive": In these ads by Backer and Spielvogel, we find the most overtly political setting of any recent television commercial. "Senate Hearing," a pre-Irangate ad, takes place in a Senate committee room where a nervous secretary of defense is being quizzed about his department's Meister Brau expenses. "Our boys deserve an expensive beer," the secretary declares. Informed that Meister Brau only tastes expensive, the secretary quickly adds that his department's beer purchases are handled by his assistant, Mr. Macklin. "Well, what's he doing with the money he is supposed to spend on beer?" an angry senator asks. There is a pause, then a jump cut to a huge power boat, the *S.S. Macklin,* and we hear a sultry woman's voice coo, "Oh Mac, it's a darling little boat." What gives "Senate Hearing" its final comedic irony is not, however, the duping of a cabinet official. The irony comes from the lightness with which a theft of tax dollars is treated. At the end of the commercial, we see Macklin basking in luxury with the dollars he has saved by purchasing Meister Brau. As the camera pulls away from his boat, we are asked not to think about his being caught, but to be amused at the life he is now living and to treat as commonplace his kind of crime.

It is the left that ought to draw some encouragement from the success these ads are having. To be sure, the ads are not radical in intent. They owe more to a close watching of "Saturday Night Live" than to a close reading of Marx, and their attacks on the system are ultimately cynical, resting on the supposition that, if clever enough, such attacks can sell products. Nonetheless, in the end as intrinsic to these ads as their cynicism and hype is the disenchantment they assume on the part of their audience. The ads acknowledge an America in which 53 percent of the public believes that most corporate executives are dishonest and the president is lying about Irangate.

Since 1980 the conventional wisdom among both liberals and progressives has been that raising fundamental political questions at election time is self-defeating because it turns off middle America. What these Madison Avenue ads show is that such a rationale, if once true, no longer holds. As middle America views nightly television, it is neither shocked nor angered by commercials that insist there are systemic weaknesses in our economy, our government, our national character. People watch an old man accept a teenage job, follow a montage of breaking products, stare at a car salesman telling lie after lie, see a government official vacation on stolen tax dollars, and their sense of reality is confirmed, even as they smile and find themselves coaxed into buying more.

Indeed, for the next generation of television watchers, even these ads may be too politically tame. Since 1986, the hottest ad campaign for the youth market has been one by Jordache jeans. In Jordache's thirty-second spots, all of which were done in-house, its jeans get five seconds worth of mention. What carries the Jordache commercials are the Jordache-wearing teenagers talking about an America they find to be "really screwed up." These are teenagers with money. But they are angry rather than accepting of the world they have inherited; and, as the news footage of Woodstock and a Vietnam War protest in one of the commercials shows, they wonder why their baby-boom parents have lost track of their generation's history. □

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Luther Carpenter

THE RULING CLASS

MONEY AND CLASS IN AMERICA: NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS ON OUR CIVIL RELIGION, by Lewis H. Lapham. New York: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1988. 243 pp. $18.95.

THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES, by Tom Wolfe. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1987. 659 pp. $19.95.

Many sociologists deny there is a ruling class. Paul Fussell says there is one—but it is "top out of sight." Albert Gore, George Bush, Robert Dole, and Richard Gephardt accused each other of belonging to it but wouldn't be caught dead in it. Donald Trump and Lee Iacocca revel in it. What can a poor boy do?

Two very agitated authors offer to guide us to the truth. Lewis Lapham is a semidelinquent scion of the old elite. He has visited the famed Bohemian Grove and rubs shoulders with those who matter on Manhattan's East Side—yet he is so daring as to edit an old and prestigious magazine. Tom Wolfe's publisher portrays him as "the foremost chronicler of the way we live in America."

Our guides don't give us a systematic description of the ruling class. They even find it hard to name them. Wolfe calls them the "Masters of the Universe" after the children's fantasy figures. Lapham prefers the "equestrian class," which he uses less ironically than Bernard Shaw did in *Heartbreak House*. Shaw's equestrian class lived in Horseback Hall, which "consisted of a prison for horses with an annex for the ladies and gentlemen who rode them, hunted them, talked about them, bought them and sold them, and gave nine-tenths of their lives to them, dividing the other tenth between charity, churchgoing (as a substitute for religion), and conservative electioneering (as a substitute for politics)." Lapham's equestrians aren't really horsemen, but "those who can afford to ride rather than walk and who can buy any or all of the baubles that constitute the proofs of social status."

Both definitions would comfort those who say there isn't a ruling class—Lapham's by its vagueness and Wolfe's by its mockery of pretense. Both, however, agree that their subjects *want* to be a separate class. Wolfe's protagonist, Sherman McCoy, struggles to assert class everywhere. He barely restrains himself from waging class warfare when a worker in his garage calls him "Sherm."

The Masters or riders have two attributes—money and maleness. Maleness is a given—there are no important women in either book, just hostesses—and, for Wolfe, a problem. The problem is whether "masculinity" is atrophying in the world of finance. It has no usefulness there, but Wolfe's protagonist still wants it. In Wolfe's scenario, it is necessary to use physical violence against the underclass.

Money leaves the Masters and riders feeling insubstantial. Wolfe's protagonist can't tell his daughter what he does. Sherman doesn't build buildings or print books. He doesn't make anything or have men working under him. His wife woundingly resorts to metaphor: Golden crumbs stick to his hands. Sherman is a bond salesman, but that's not glamorous enough. Lapham describes the same people, those who capture the new money bubbling up in New York.

Wolfe and Lapham are drawn to this new money because its possessors are more colorful, less inhibited than older segments of the ruling classes. Lapham concentrates on them because they are the model presented to all of America to copy; he doesn't ask whether they've really taken power away from industrialists and inherited wealth. These new wealthy have no visible relationship to the means of production and no particular social function. They consume, but are not a leisure class. Sherman McCoy makes millions, but can't leave his desk to go to the bathroom. Above all, the Masters and riders demand. They "want it all"—sex, status, fame. Lapham ultimately sees the basis of their incessant demanding as priestly rather than economic: They are the priests of a civil religion of money.

But they are frustrated by their own civil religion. The things they acquire don't satisfy needs, nor do

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they confer freedom. If not, why get into this morass of consumption? For both Lapham and Wolfe, the answer is status. But status is intrinsically unsatisfying: It exists in someone else's mind. That someone else is undependable—a rival in status games who grudgingly gives approval while seeking to change the rules and take one's status away. There are no friends here, only "cold . . . lizards" in Lapham's phrase. In his hour of need, no one will help Sherman McCoy. His company drops him; the president of his co-op board wants him out of the building; his mistress runs away with an artist. Even in good times, according to Lapham, "the faithful fall victim to a nameless and stupefying dread."

Their chief fear is of losing their status and the money that makes it possible. This fear makes them dangerous. Sherman and his mistress panic and lash out at a boy who intends to rob them. They kill the boy. Here Wolfe and Lapham part company. As Wolfe works out his scenario, the panic is justified. New York City is out to get Sherman—not because of his money, but because he is the "Great White Defendant." "They"—resentful poor blacks, egged on by an evil antipoverty pimp, who leeches off gullible liberals—howl for Sherman's head. Corrupt newspapers, repulsive radicals and feminists, and a D.A. running for reelection all feed the resentment.

Wolfe offers Sherman, and by implication the new moneyed class, a way out. Get rid of your vanities—your belief in the old moneyed class, your desire to join Society, your belief that you can buy immunity—and Fight Back. At the end, Sherman slugs the poverty pimp's assistant. This gives Sherman the same kind of exhilaration he found while selling bonds. It also solves the masculinity problem. It earns the respect of the cops. Sherman has now taken Wolfe's advice, given earlier in the book: Turn "fucking *Irish*. The Irish been living the last twelve hundred years on dreams of revenge."

Lapham erects a different scenario of doom on the same premises of a false god. He likens the riders to Roman senators before the fall of the Republic and to the Ancien Regime in France. That thought makes Lapham pull back. Escape the sterility of the Midas touch; give up the blind faith in money. What is notable about this cry, hidden at the end of the book, is its feebleness. Lapham doesn't really want to change gods. Earlier he has said that he doesn't want to be a prophet, that he finds money truly enjoyable. He has no other god in mind. Maybe an environmental ethic would do, but he has no love for it. So his counsel to the rich is at most a plea for moderation. To take his advice would be to turn back into the colorless WASP elite Lapham can't even bear to write about.

More significantly, think of the advice that neither Lapham nor Wolfe offers to the elite: Carnegie's plea for a Gospel of Wealth, using intelligent charity to buy the masses off and recycle the money; or the Gaullist argument for a welfare state to integrate the workers into the nation and get them to work for its advancement. Neither of these arguments is conceivable to our new moneyed classes. Nor do Lapham and Wolfe exhort the wealthy to perform a service for society, to become competent at ruling. Compare them with the captain of Shaw's *Heartbreak House:* "Learn your business as an Englishman. . . . Navigation. Learn it and live; or leave it and be damned."

These books are revealing, but neither is really worth reading. The humor is mostly one-liners. When Wolfe invents a good line—"A liberal is a conservative who's been arrested"—he can't resist using it twice. Wolfe's book has good observations of cops and courts, punks and fear, but the claim that he's "the foremost chronicler" is hype. Anthony Lukas's *Common Ground* has much more to say about racial and class antagonism; Robert Parker's early "Spenser" novels come closer to solving the problem of maleness. "Civil religion" is a useful idea (and it doesn't matter that Lapham borrowed a lot from Marx. Old wine in new bottles isn't so bad when the audience would never look at the old bottles). "Civil religion" can account for the self-advertisement of the new wealthy and for the fact that my working-class students feel no hostility to them; it fits the ritualistic nature of American politics.

If these books have some value as observation, major problems come when Wolfe and Lapham try to build on their observations. It might be worthwhile to think about Lapham's fear that the new wealthy are a doomed Ancien Regime—but he offers the idea as an afterthought.

Is Reagan's accumulated deficit really the same as Louis XVI's? One can't just design a new civil religion because there's a need for it; intellectual history is littered with pleas like Lapham's. Similarly, one would be a fool to say that Wolfe's scenario couldn't happen. But there's no need to take Wolfe's advice, to turn New York City into Belfast. Wolfe's scenario has one glaring exaggeration: The power of "Them," Wolfe's black demon and his demonstrators and the supineness of the media and the justice system before them. Whatever one thinks of the Tawana Brawley case, Alton Maddox and Al Sharpton haven't gotten their way.

This exaggeration is matched by another exagger-

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ation. The wealthy are hardly so powerless and ready to drop each other to woo the masses: Look at how the "system" goes on rehabilitating Richard Nixon, Victor Posner, and Ivan Boesky. Our ruling class has resources that these two authors don't see. They show us the pretenders. These pretenders believe in class intensely. But, as Wolfe and Lapham show, their claims have a precarious base. This new part of the ruling class doesn't rule anything but pieces of paper. They don't manage real things or people; they don't produce or create. The new wealthy have no sense of tomorrow or of the whole of society. All they want to do is to go on making money. That's all they use their power for—to rewrite the rules of the game to give themselves more money, through tax "reforms" and the proliferation of exotic gambling devices such as stock market futures. Since the October 1987 break in the stock market, they have sought to defend themselves against tighter regulation by blackmail: Let us have our way, or we'll cause a depression. They can't create, but they can destroy factories, companies, and cities with their pieces of paper. That makes them dangerous, but we still ought to find ways to cut them down to size. □

Jeffrey Scheuer

A TALE OF TWO VISIONS

A CONFLICT OF VISIONS: IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF POLITICAL STRUGGLES, by Thomas Sowell. New York: William Morrow, 1987. 273 pp. $15.95.

It may be a truism to say that a clash between two broad and diametrically opposed visions of society underlies virtually all democratic political debate. Yet these polar world views are seldom explored systematically; few thinkers, in this polemical and analytic age, are concerned with charting the metaphysical divide between these great watersheds of the mind or with locating the headwaters of their moral and political currents.

In *A Conflict of Visions,* Thomas Sowell, an economist and senior fellow at the Hoover Institute, draws an extensive map. Like any good theorist, Sowell is not afraid of generality; he is aware that collapsing the ideological spectrum into two polar visions invites certain qualifications, the most obvious being that "a continuum has been dichotomized." But that admission is hardly fatal; without some such approach we could hardly think at all. And in the course of Sowell's analysis, the logic and validity of this dichotomy become strikingly clear.

A Conflict of Visions is a survey, not a venture into new theoretical areas. It will not prompt a great deal of rethinking of ideological commitments or conceptual categories; much of the argument is no more (but no less) than a careful exploration of rather obvious fissures within the political spectrum. What is remarkable is not the novelty of the thesis but its explanatory power in demarcating familiar terrain, even for those who disagree with Sowell's conservative views.

What Sowell calls "the constrained vision" is epitomized by Hobbes, Hume, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, Alexander Hamilton, and latter-day conservatives such as Friedrich A. Hayek. The more liberal vision, which he labels "unconstrained," is exemplified by thinkers from Rousseau, Thomas Paine, and William Godwin in the eighteenth century to Ronald Dworkin and John Rawls in the twentieth. The two visions differ at every level and on every point, differ systematically, perhaps even necessarily. Only in terms of the most basic moral and humanitarian values and (in most cases) a commitment to democratic government are they at all concordant. On the conceptual keystones of freedom, equality, rights, and justice—as in their views of human nature and history, economics and law, war and peace, crime and punishment—they offer fundamentally different modes of perception. Because these differences are systematic, and not simply accidental or emotive, the political spectrum resolves, on a theoretical level, into Sowell's dichotomy.

The constrained vision is more pessimistic and (by its own lights) more realistic. It values settled experience and the known grooves of tradition, seen as the unconscious accumulation of practical wisdom about human nature and the uses and limits of government. It accepts trade-offs rather than dreaming of golden mountains, regards justice as instrumental to a stable social order. Whereas adherents of the constrained vision seek order and accept compromise, unconstrained thinkers seek ideal solutions and final justice. On the latter view, mankind is more plastic and perfectible, and so is the state; both are held to higher and more complicated standards. Where the constrained vision trusts in the uncoordinated acts of multitudes (at least within the economic sphere), the unconstrained, according to Sowell, trusts in the rational agency of the few.

On its clearest axis, the dichotomy is between a purely formal and procedural conception of justice on the constrained right, keyed to rules and processes, and a rival conception on the left (indeed, definitive of the left) in which justice also involves

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the distribution of society's material and status-related goods. Constrained justice stresses adherence to rules; unconstrained justice stresses results. Political equality (representation, civil liberties, due process) is a sufficient condition of constrained justice; but only a necessary condition of unconstrained, which insists on economic equality as well.

Conservatives (with some rare exceptions, such as Burke and Hegel) get the prize for neatness and atomistic simplicity; progressives, on the other hand, offer a broader, more holistic picture of social reality—including the fundamental recognition that rules and results (like the economic categories of "stock" and "flow") are distinct but interdependent ways of ordering human conduct. Processes determine results, and vice versa; opportunity and welfare are intertwined. These are propositions that conservatism cannot accept.

Though sound in its essentials, Sowell's analysis invites several objections. One of the chief discongruities between the two visions, in his view, is in regard to the "locus of discretion" of political and economic power. The unconstrained vision, he claims, prizes the "articulated rationality" of individual surrogates, whereas the constrained vision prefers that social decisions follow from "whatever systematic interaction produces from the innumerable individuals exercising their own individual discretion in their own individual interests." The implication is that the right is more democratic and obedient to mass choice, while the unconstrained left, putting ends before means, is given to quick fixes and autocratic fiat.

This is an old canard; suffice it to say that the search for new forms of democratic participation has been a longstanding concern of the American left and not a preoccupation of conservative thinkers. Sowell and his compatriots on the right confuse the market with democracy, and talk as if every man, woman, and child in America, if only left alone by government, would be a thriving entrepreneur. In fact, if you happen to be a worker, consumer, dependent, poor person, or small-business person, the market is no democracy, and the welfare state is not the nemesis of your basic economic freedoms but their inadequate guarantor—a shield against the accidents of birth, the ravages of fortune, and the predations of larger economic enterprises.

At its best, the hostility of the constrained view toward government is double-edged. The tenets of classical liberalism may serve as a useful brake on unconstrained thinking and as an intellectual bulwark against statist bureaucracy or oppression (although, in the Reagan-Meese Era, such tendencies are more often found on the other side of the divide). But by construing freedom in narrowly formal and negative terms, and principally in relation to the state, constrained theorists obscure the fact that there are various overlapping and interacting kinds of freedom, definable in terms of various loci of impediment: not just governmental but also natural, psychological, interpersonal, and corporate. The state can be much more than a night watchman, yet much less than a Big Brother.

A second objection is to Sowell's view that Marxism—in the unseemly company of utilitarianism and fascism—is a hybrid of the two visions. This claim deserves, if only for its novelty and improbability, far more treatment than he accords it. The brief argument is that Marxism is constrained as a theory of history but unconstrained as a normative vision. However, even if it is possible to divorce Marx's historical materialism from his normative vision—which seems unlikely—it is the normative dimension that is most relevant to Sowell's vision-mapping, and in that dimension Marxism remains the very zenith of unconstrained thought.

The sort of social determinism that Marxism epitomizes is in fact a central issue of this book. Sowell correctly emphasizes, and it is his most important theme, that the two visions differ most basically as conceptions of "social causality." The constrained view is more existential, whereas the unconstrained view assigns significance to a wide range of causal forces and agencies in society. A vision is, to a very considerable extent, "a sense of causation." However, in claiming that what distinguishes the two visions is "their different empirical assumptions as to human nature and social cause and effect," and not normative assumptions or premises, Sowell weds that cardinal truth to an error. The two visions indeed differ profoundly about social causality, the scope of individual responsibility, and the consequent level of moral traffic in reciprocal rights and duties that justice requires. But such divergent ways of perceiving social causality are not strictly empirical, as he claims. They are quintessentially normative, if perhaps not the ultimate source of all norms and values.

The fault line between the two visions, while clearly visible at the bedrock level of causality, penetrates even further into the geology of the mind. At a deeper level, it centers on different thresholds of complexity within social thought itself: thresholds of tolerance, one might say, for the various overlapping intellectual distinctions and connections that are available to us as tools of understanding and judgment. Sowell alludes to this in passing:

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> The complexity of social processes is a recurrent theme in both visions, but in very different senses. To those with the constrained vision, it is axiomatic that no individual or council can master this complexity, so that systemic processes—market economies, social traditions, constitutional law—are relied on instead. But to those with the unconstrained vision, individuals and councils can and must wrestle with social complexity.

Here, Sowell holds the solution to the riddle of ideology in his hands. Conflicts between process-oriented and result-oriented justice; between an existential world view and one that incorporates layers of social causality; between a view of freedom or equality that is narrowly centered on the state, and one that accommodates a broader range of social forces—these are important aspects of a deeper theoretical chasm, between simpler and more complex normative visions. The unconstrained left proposes a more ambitious moral agenda, with deeper and more intricate theoretical foundations. (Thus, with the notable exception of Hegel, there is no conservative equivalent—either in profundity or obscurity—of Marx, or even of Kant.) The ancient dilemma is how to realize that more extravagant and humane vision through the cumbersome agency of the state without incurring the costs that might validate the simpler and more frugal vision of the constrained right.

The objections noted here are hardly fatal; what is most lacking in the book is not some crucial insight (although, as I have suggested, I believe an important theoretical step was overlooked), but a systematic defense of the constrained vision that Sowell clearly prefers or a sustained attack on the higher, more difficult ground of the unconstrained position. Yet at the same time, one of the book's refreshing features, despite its discernible rightward tilt, is its balance and lack of polemic. Sowell is not primarily concerned here with partisan political argument; thus, simply taking him to task for his incipient conservatism misses the point.

Most exhortations to "examine our assumptions" are mere cant; nothing reinforces assumptions like examining them. Least of all does experience (in any immediate or empirical sense) confirm or disconfirm the world views to which we adhere. In the end they are essentially contestable. But in laying bare some of the substructure of competing moral-political visions, Thomas Sowell has performed a useful service. To liberals and radicals—who inhabit, by degrees, the larger and more starry moral universe that defines the unconstrained view—the particular challenge of *A Conflict of Visions* is its ability to impart a measure of intellectual plausibility to both visions.

Although each claims to comport better with the "facts" of social life, neither vision (nor any variant of them) is in any objective sense superior; there is no objective sense, no higher seat of judgment. The differences between them are normative, not conceptual or empirical. A *prima facie* case can be made for either as an understanding of social causality, and of the subtle logical and metaphysical questions of form and matter, means and ends, that underpin moral and political debate. Each appeals, at least in these pages, to our best and most basic intellectual instincts: the impulse to isolate and simplify, in the one case, and the impulse to connect and complicate, in the other. The end of ideology will not arrive until these contrary drives, the most elemental functions of the rational mind, are magically reconciled or brutally suppressed. □

Alan Howard

CHALLENGING THE CONSENSUS

TUNNEL VISION: LABOR, THE WORLD ECONOMY, AND CENTRAL AMERICA, by Daniel Cantor and Juliet Schor. Boston: South End Press. 88 pp. $5.00.

A few years back, acknowledging its losses in membership and power, the AFL-CIO launched a fairly serious critique of its policies and operations. If it did not come up with a lot of terrific answers, it did ask a lot of the right questions.

Missing from that critique was any discussion of labor's foreign policy, an absence that was not surprising. The late AFSCME leader, Jerry Wurf, once said he could challenge George Meany on any domestic issue but not on Vietnam. The tendency of deferring to the federation president on foreign policy is still powerful, but there are alarming signs that democracy may be breaking out.

If that outbreak should become a full-fledged epidemic, this book will deserve some of the credit. The book opens pointedly with an account of the debate on the floor of the 1985 AFL-CIO convention; the subject, United States aid to the Nicaraguan *contras*. To the consternation of the federation's Department of International Affairs (DIA), representatives of several major unions wanted a clear denunciation of the Reagan administration's support of the *contras*. Not since thirty years before, when Walter Reuther took on Brother Meany's view of the world, had the official House of Labor heard such a

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ruckus over foreign policy. This time there was no question of leaving the federation, as Reuther eventually did. This time the argument was driven by the conviction that these questions were just as important as—and intimately linked to—many domestic issues. It was the beginning of a rebellion that poses a challenge to the Meany legacy across the entire spectrum of labor's foreign policy.

Cantor and Schor define that legacy—the "Tunnel Vision" of their title—as the strategy of cold war anticommunism adopted by labor following World War II, and carried on to this day. They argue that this strategy was flawed at birth, its impulse springing not from labor's own needs but from the objectives of American corporate and governmental elites of the period.

The AFL-CIO understands it is essential to help develop strong, democratic unions abroad. Cantor and Schor do not take issue with this reasoning. Their critique, delivered in telling detail, is that it has been applied with an exceedingly rigid definition of just what constitutes a "free" trade union. "Either you are pro-capitalist or pro-communist, pro-American or pro-Soviet," they charge. "There is no non-alignment, no third way, no alternative model of economic and social development."

It's possible that in Europe immediately after the war this imposition of a bipolar, East-West political frame had plausibility. But when the AFL-CIO continued to apply this same simplistic view to movements and governments in the developing world, the policy, at least in terms of its own declared objectives, self-destructed.

The authors treat the infamous case of Guatemala in 1954 as an example of what went wrong. The American labor movement took a formula that seemed to have worked so well in Europe—undermine communist-controlled unions and foster rivals that resembled the more moderate U.S. unions—and applied it in a country where working people absolutely needed more politicized unions. The conditions that had shaped American unions simply did not exist in Guatemala. Guatemalan workers needed a radical restructuring of land and labor relations and they freely elected a government determined to carry out these changes. It was not a communist or even socialist government, though it was supported by radicals and nationalists of various hues. The event that triggered the CIA coup overthrowing the Arbenz government was its attempt to nationalize United Fruit Company land. American labor officials played an active role in the coup and were proud of it. They have had very little to say about the relation of that coup to the past thirty years of repression against workers and unions in Guatemala. It was without doubt a terrible mistake and established the pattern: the overthrow of Bosch in the Dominican Republic, Goulart in Brazil, Allende in Chile, and on through the current fiascos in Central America.

American labor still has not come to grips with the consequences of such actions throughout the hemisphere. More than twenty years ago Bill Dougherty of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) stated what remains the controlling vision of federation policy: "The key question is the future of Latin American revolution: toward communist totalitarianism or toward democracy. For the American labor movement this is one of the paramount, pivotal issues; all other questions . . . must remain secondary."

Cantor and Schor argue that there is a spectrum of economic and political systems between those two poles and that by refusing to recognize those middle ranges the DIA isolates American workers from important allies in the developing world.

The powerful COSATU federation of black workers in South Africa, for example, virtually refuses to speak with the AFL-CIO because of its funding of rival unions deemed less radical, though in this area there have been recent signs of a new realism within the federation. Closer to home, the DIA signed up early in the Reagan administration's crusade against Nicaragua, trying like the devil to pull together an opposition labor front to work in conjunction with the *contras* to bring down the Sandinista government.

Nowhere is the triumph of ideology over reality clearer than in El Salvador and nowhere have the

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results been more disastrous. Periodically the DIA publishes a list of "good" unions and "bad" unions in that country. Names and numbers constantly shift from one posting to the next. Last year's bastion of free democratic unionism is this year's terrorist front and vice versa. Documents galore back up the contradictory charges. The time, energy, and resources devoted to these intrigues are mind-boggling. It would be a great farce except for the fact that thousands of workers and labor leaders have been murdered while all this goes on, and so we are dealing here with tragedy.

This challenge to the consensus on labor's foreign policy that erupted in 1985 continues to frame debate at the highest levels of the movement. Members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council looked at the agenda of their meeting last winter and saw that they were to discuss the Cantor and Schor "Attack on AFL-CIO Policy," in the felicitous phrasing of a memo prepared by AIFLD staffer David Jessup and distributed at the meeting.

Although the memo expends most of its effort defending the AFL's immediate postwar European policies, it does raise two important questions. "Would the AFL-CIO more vigorously pursue plant-closing legislation if it cooperated with communist unions around the world?" Jessup asks rhetorically. "Would we be better able to stem the tide of imports from countries that violate worker rights if we embraced the WFTU [World Federation of Trade Unions]? The logic of this argument is difficult to understand."

What is difficult to understand is how Jessup could so completely miss the point of Cantor and Schor's critique. For what they are saying and amply document is that some of the most powerful unions in the developing world—unions leading the fight for workers' rights in their countries and for restrictions on multinational capital that would benefit American workers—are neither communist nor affiliated with the WFTU. And that even where they are, to the extent that cooperation would benefit American workers, yes, cooperation should at least be carefully considered. After all, to follow the logic of the DIA's anti-Sandinista campaign, shouldn't we now consider cooperation with those communist-led, anti-Sandinista unions in Nicaragua that share our goal of defending workers' rights against the Sandinista government?

While on the subject of logic, there is the matter of how the federation's foreign policy is funded. Virtually all of the funding—over $40 million a year, more than the AFL-CIO spends on all of its domestic operations—comes from U.S. government sources. This would seem to suggest a degree of influence over policy, though the federation insists there is "no hold by the government over the purposes and programs of the AFL-CIO abroad." Imagine the reaction of any labor leader in this country to, say, a think-tank that got 95 percent of its funding from big corporations and yet claimed to be absolutely independent.

Although many of the federation's training and assistance programs in developing countries are quite good and carried out by dedicated trade unionists, its apparatuses in those countries are knowingly utilized by American ambassadors and CIA station chiefs to carry out *their* missions—which, it may safely be assumed, do not consistently reflect the needs and interests of workers at home or abroad.

Is there light at the end of this tunnel? Cantor and Schor suggest that it depends on the extent to which the leaders of our best unions apply themselves to the problem—asking the same kind of tough, bread-and-butter questions they ask in dealing with the everyday problems of their members. Because this has begun to happen in regard to South Africa and Central America, we have seen the first hopeful signs of federation foreign policy kicking and screaming its way into the real world. And although there are no easy formulas for shaping this new policy, Cantor and Schor have raised all the right questions and have examined them with the rigorous and honest intelligence they deserve. □

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A Correction

Editors:

Alfred Kazin ("They Made It," *Dissent,* Fall 1988) suggests that I find the legal execution of innocents "acceptable" in the implied sense of "unobjectionable," wherefore I am despicable. This is an adscititious misinterpretation. In the context "acceptable" meant "predictable" or "factually correct" as the prediction of X murders in N.Y.—or the assertion that they occurred—would be. A literary critic should have been able to figure that out—had he wanted to.

ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG
New York, N.Y. □

Kazin & Cockburn

Editors:

In the course of explaining with such grace why he is a "Cockburn-hater" (*Dissent,* Winter 1988), Alfred Kazin writes that in "Noam Chomsky's virtual defense" of Robert Faurisson, "the issue was just the murder of six million Jews." This conclusion is as revealing as Kazin's charge that Cockburn is a "Jew-hater," which he now quietly retracts without comment. The issue of the murder of six million Jews never arose even marginally in this "virtual defense." Rather, I made explicit the elementary distinction between defense of the right of free expression and defense of the views expressed. To assure that there could be no possible confusion on the matter, I also reiterated my own statements that the Holocaust was "the most fantastic outburst of collective insanity in human history" and that "one has already lost one's humanity" by even "entering into the arena of argument and counterargument" on this matter (1969, and repeatedly since). Plainly, Kazin's conclusion about "the issue" could only be drawn by someone whose contempt for traditional libertarian values is so profound that he cannot conceive that they could be defended.

The issue was not the Holocaust—that never even arose—but rather the defense of freedom against fascist/Stalinist doctrine. Faurisson was suspended from teaching French literature at the (state) university on grounds that he could not be protected from violence, then brought to trial for "falsification of history" and condemned by the court for failure of "responsibility" and "prudence" as a historian, ignoring relevant documentation and dismissing documents with "a semantic analysis always oriented towards negation," "allowing others" to use his writings for nefarious ends, etc. (*Le Monde,* July 18, 1981). The court thus effectively established the right of the state to determine historical truth and punish deviation from it, the first endorsement of the essence of the Zhdanov doctrine in the West, to my knowledge. I would not hesitate in a comparable defense (not "virtual") of Kazin were comparable circumstances to arise, despite what I think of his views, attitudes, and technique. The efforts to conceal the real issue in a flood of deceit are not without interest; I have commented on them in these pages before. Only to a mind immersed in totalitarian doctrine could it appear that the issue was the murder of six million Jews, not the scandalous attack on the right of freedom of expression. That much, at least, is obvious.

As for Kazin's tantrum about Cockburn, like the original lie, it falls so far beneath contempt as to merit no word of comment. But a word might be in order about the accompanying editorial note, in which Irving Howe apologizes for "Mr. Kazin's remark that Professor Tuttleton (not named but clearly identifiable) has 'private reasons for snapping at Jews.' " He apologizes for the "negligence" of the editors in "not checking charges of such a nature." Pointedly avoided is an apology for a far more scurrilous charge about the clearly identified Cockburn, or any hint that there might have been "negligence" in this case, from which we may draw our own conclusions.

NOAM CHOMSKY
Cambridge, Mass.

ALFRED KAZIN Replies:

Chomsky is indignant because I expressed myself strongly—with an irony he seems to have missed—about a constant apologist for Soviet totalitarianism and terror. Chomsky is very far from being that himself. On the contrary, and I admire him not only for his originality in language studies, but for trying to stand above the ideological and nationalistic passions that dominate our era.

Nevertheless, Chomsky, because of the high and sometimes inhuman level of abstraction on which he proceeds politically, invariably finds himself at the side of people and causes he does not agree with. This libertarianism and proud self-emancipation can be admirable. But not when it goes against all common sense, natural human loyalties, and interests. Then defends its haughty abstractions on the ground that "the other side" (meaning the United States) is just as bad.

Anyone who reads *Dissent* probably knows that on the grounds of "liberty of expression" Chomsky thought that Robert Faurisson's denial of the Holocaust, his allegation that it was nothing but a Jewish plot and hoax, deserved a

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forum. No matter what frightful things Faurisson said, Chomsky proclaimed him just a French "liberal." But notice that in his present letter Chomsky thinks the Holocaust just crazy, irrational. I submit that anyone who can still say this is not a serious thinker politically. In September 1980, in a letter to Lucy Dawidowicz, Chomsky equally distinguished himself when he managed to blast Russian dissidents just because he had heard that some of them supported the American presence in Vietnam. Again and again, as in his notorious attempt to minimize the Pol Pot massacres in Cambodia, Chomsky thinks he is scoring a point by referring to greater horrors on the "other side."

That is what Chomsky does in his political writings—he scores points. But the massive, even "deadly," documentation he then supplies never goes into the historic and central subject of power relations. All he is really saying is that everybody is as bad as everybody else. Except that "we" are worse.

Talking about the "other side!" Whenever I encounter Chomsky's scorn for the country that somehow made possible his extraordinary career and supports his constant attacks on it because he is professionally what he is, I think of something I. I. Rabi said before he died—"If I had stayed in Poland I would have been a tailor." □

(*The correspondence regarding Mr. Kazin's article is now closed.* Eds.)

What They Called Hook

Editors:

Sidney Hook claims, in an aside to his letter in the Spring 1988 *Dissent* that ". . . the *New International* denounced me as a Fascist. . . ." I can't of course claim that no one ever called him that in the pages of the *NI*, but if he is referring to the article in the July–August 1953 issue in which Julius Falk and I dissected the politics, logic, and literary ethics of his book, *Heresy Yes, Conspiracy No,* he is mistaken.

We called Professor Hook quite a few things in that article: "Philosopher of the Cold War"; "an intellectual card sharp"; a leader of "a new school of authoritarian liberalism," and a "policeman's whistle blower on the campus." We said he used the argumentative sophistication of "a street corner rabble rouser," and was an exponent of "a sanctimonious conservatism." And, finally, we labelled him "an Americanoid . . . the symmetrical opposite of the term Stalinoid," and sought to give that term a precise definition.

In rereading the article today, I am amazed at our literary restraint, and the care with which we demonstrated the precise accuracy of each term. Fortunately for the elegance of public discourse, the term for Hook's public philosophy that has become popular is "neoconservative" rather than our awkward "Americanoid." The fact that he now says we called him a "Fascist" just demonstrates that his advancing age has taken nothing off his intellectual knuckleball. I can only repeat our warning to Hook's readers of thirty-five years ago: "The sleight-of-pen involved . . . should make the reader aware that he is in the presence of a master."

GORDON K. HASKELL
Santa Cruz, Calif. □

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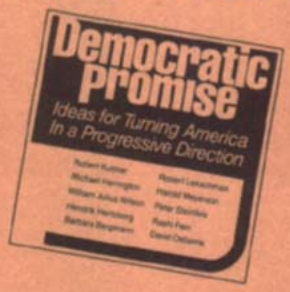

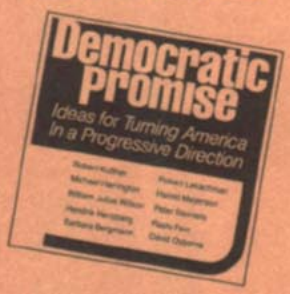

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